



# AFTER EXPULSION

1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry

JONATHAN RAY

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*1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry*

*Jonathan Ray*



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*For my parents, Susan and Clifford Ray*

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## Introduction

Of the many calamities to befall the Jewish people during their arduous passage from the medieval to the modern world, none was more sharply felt or more widely chronicled by its contemporaries than the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. The last in a long line of similar expulsions in medieval Europe, it marked the end of one of the most celebrated periods of affluence and intellectual productivity in Jewish history. Together with the fall of Muslim Granada early that same year, the Expulsion of the Jews represented the ultimate failure of inter-faith coexistence for which medieval Iberia is so often praised. For its victims, 1492 was only the beginning of a lengthy and painful journey. In its wake, the dispossessed suffered a series of hardships ranging from starvation and physical abuse to captivity and forced conversion and were driven across the Mediterranean in search of protection, prosperity, and religious freedom.

There can be little argument that the Expulsion of 1492 was a disaster for those involved and a major turning point in both Jewish and Spanish history.<sup>1</sup> And yet a true understanding of this pivotal period in Jewish and

Mediterranean history also requires that we move past the usual elegies to a lost civilization. The impulse to memorialize the tragedy of the Expulsion should not obscure the larger story of how the Jews of medieval Iberia reconstituted their communities and refashioned their cultural identities as they transitioned to new lands and a new age. In truth, the aftermath of 1492 raises its own set of questions. How did the Spanish Jews view the world into which they were cast? What was life like for the refugees and their children, and how did they navigate the treacherous waters of exile? Finally, how did these outcasts evolve into one of the most economically and culturally significant diasporas of the early modern world?

This book offers a detailed exposition of these questions. It chronicles the voyage of Iberian Jewry from medieval Iberia to the wider Mediterranean world of the sixteenth century, and from a collection of relatively disconnected municipal communities to a recognizable diaspora society. It follows the peregrinations of the refugees of 1492 and their descendants, and shows how they built a distinct society and new collective identity that has endured until the present day. The result is a reassessment of the nature and development of Sephardic society and many of its central features. At the same time, recounting the evolution of the Sephardic world offers a unique opportunity to assess the political, social, and cultural interactions among the various religious communities of the early modern Mediterranean.

### A “Mediterranean Society” Once More?

Although it is often seen as the sad conclusion to medieval Jewish history, the Expulsion of 1492 actually represents the reemergence of one of the great themes of medieval Jewish society, namely the full-scale integration of Iberian Jewry into the broader Mediterranean world. The close association of Iberian Jews with other Jewish communities around the Mediterranean was perhaps most famously articulated by the eminent historian S. D. Goitein. In *A Mediterranean Society*, his monumental study of Jewish life during the High Middle Ages, Goitein provided an unforgettable portrait of a world in which Jews drew upon a shared religious heritage to build a web of mercantile networks that flowed throughout the Mediterranean basin.<sup>2</sup> But this pan-Mediterranean society began to unravel long before the close of the Middle Ages. These networks and the wide-ranging communal bonds that they helped promote flourished only until the mid-thirteenth century, by which time the unity and influence of the Jewish Mediterranean had begun to wane. The Jews’ role in long-distance trade was largely overtaken by Christian merchant communities, and Jewish society assumed an increasingly provincial

character. During the later Middle Ages, contacts among the various nodes of Mediterranean Jewry remained sporadic, and Goitein's "Mediterranean Society" gave way to distinct regional Jewish cultures. In Iberia, where Christian lords had come to dominate the peninsula, Jewish society turned away from the Mediterranean and toward the Jewish centers of northern Europe.<sup>3</sup> The use of Arabic and Judeo-Arabic, languages that had once connected Iberian Jews to their coreligionists in North Africa and the Levant, declined sharply after the thirteenth century. By the time of their expulsion in 1492, knowledge of Arabic among Spanish Jews was limited to a handful of intellectuals and diplomats.

Over the course of the fourteenth century, the social and economic fragmentation of the Jewish world slowly began to reverse itself. In contrast to the Judeo-Arabic world created by the absorption of Jews into the Pax Islamica of the ninth century, the first tentative steps toward the reintegration of Mediterranean Jewry came as a result of their exclusion from much of the Latin West. European Jews began moving into and around the Mediterranean as they were driven out of France and Provence, with many settling in Italy and North Africa. But the decisive moment, at least with regard to Iberian Jewry, came in 1391, when a series of anti-Jewish riots swept throughout the Spanish kingdoms. In addition to marking one of the darkest moments in medieval Jewish history, the massacres and forced conversions of that fateful year also set in motion the first phase of the Sephardic Diaspora. Professing Jews and newly baptized Conversos alike fled the peninsula in search of new homes, and subsequent attacks on Iberian Conversos and their descendants prolonged this process of resettlement for much of the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

The relocation of large numbers of French and Iberian Jews soon became part of a larger trend. Indeed, parallel movements of other religious groups helped to characterize the transition from the medieval to the early modern world as an age of migration. The Jews of northern Europe were drifting eastward, settling primarily in the Kingdom of Poland and its neighboring states. From the sixteenth century onward, there followed a similar set of long-distance "confessional migrations" of distinct Christian groups throughout Europe.<sup>5</sup> This large-scale relocation of peoples and the various political, economic, and cultural changes it wrought constituted as decisive a break with the medieval past as did the new transregional connections forged by the European voyages of discovery. In Spain, the Expulsion of the Jews came amid a parallel process of Muslim emigration to North Africa. Those who fled the Kingdom of Granada in the years leading up to its final collapse in 1492 were followed ten years later by the remaining Muslims who chose expulsion over conversion. At the same time, the movement of black

Africans had begun to flow in the opposite direction. The arrival of the Portuguese in West Africa led to a steady influx of black slaves into Portugal and its new island possessions in the Atlantic. From Lisbon, the Portuguese introduced slaves from North and West Africa into Spain.<sup>6</sup> The exodus of Iberian Jewry after 1492 can thus be placed along a continuum of migration and resettlement of large groups of people during the late medieval and early modern period.<sup>7</sup> The prolonged nature of their migration and the political, economic, and cultural environment of the Mediterranean lands in which the majority came to settle shaped the outlines of Sephardic society just as they did for the society of the High Middle Ages described by Goitein.

### The Mediterranean World in 1492

For students of modern history, especially those in the United States, 1492 signals the shift of Spain's energies from the "Old World" of Europe and the Mediterranean to the "New World" of the Americas and the Atlantic. But this transition took decades to transpire. For many years after Columbus's voyage, European powers continued to direct a great deal of their military, political, and economic energies toward a renewed push for dominance in the Mediterranean. Even Christopher Columbus's royal patron, Ferdinand II of Aragon, showed greater interest in the Mediterranean than in the lands across the Atlantic. This focus on the Mediterranean was particularly notable after the death of Queen Isabella I in 1504, when the Castilian Cortes succeeded in limiting the king's influence to the lands of the Crown of Aragon. As a result, Ferdinand turned his attention toward Naples and Sicily, with their supplies of wheat and sugar, and to the eastern Mediterranean, where he sought to revive the Crown of Aragon's interest in the lucrative Levant trade and to direct his crusading fervor toward the Turks.<sup>8</sup> Spain's continued interest in the Mediterranean also led it to join Portugal in pursuit of new territories in North Africa, and to become embroiled with France in an effort to control the Italian Peninsula. It was not until the reign of Charles V, known in Spain as Carlos I (r. 1516–1556), that the Americas began to compete for prominence with the Mediterranean in Spanish foreign policy.

The ascendancy of the Ottoman Turks in the eastern Mediterranean paralleled that of the Spanish and Portuguese in the West. Following the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman Empire continued to expand, encompassing an ever-widening cross-section of peoples, and vying for power with other Muslim forces in North Africa and with Christian powers in Europe. Over the course of the sixteenth century, the military clashes among the various Mediterranean powers took place on an even grander

scale, fueled by increased uses of cannons and the huge fortifications they engendered, as well as an influx of gold, silver, and other raw materials. Sixteenth-century warfare also involved and consumed a seemingly endless supply of soldiers and slaves, who typically demonstrated little interest in religious ideology or any other *casus belli*. These went to war and died by the thousands of disease, drowning, starvation, and exhaustion in addition to wounds suffered in combat. They fought their fellow Christians and Muslims as often as they did those of foreign faiths, and they almost always did so for the promise of booty, or else under duress. Even the Janissaries, the elite troops of the Ottoman army, were not above open revolt against their sultan in demand for payment for their services and loyalty.

And yet for all this great expenditure of energy, men, and materiel, the renewed push for dominance in the region produced little in the way of conclusive results. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of the Mediterranean world in the sixteenth century was that Spanish and Ottoman expansion generally served to preclude either power from achieving true control of the region.<sup>9</sup> Even in their respective spheres of influence at either end of the Mediterranean, Spain and the Ottomans were forced to contend with political and economic challenges from a host of other competitors, including Portugal, Genoa, Venice, the Papal States, and the sultanate of Fez. These states, along with populist leaders of the southern Maghreb and the semi-autonomous bands of corsairs that operated throughout the Mediterranean, were pulled into the maelstrom of Mediterranean politics as potential allies and enemies of the great powers. The Portuguese, Spanish, and Ottomans drew upon the economic and navigational skills of Venetians, Genoese, Greeks, Arabs, and Armenians. Already in the fifteenth century, the decline in Genoese fortunes in the eastern Mediterranean and the simultaneous expansion of Portugal into the North Atlantic and the Maghreb led to a growing presence of Genoese in Iberia.<sup>10</sup> When Columbus set sail under the patronage of the Spanish crown, he was following in a long line of Italian-born sea captains, merchants, and explorers who had served the Spanish and Portuguese in their maritime expansion for over a century. The Genoese explorer Antoniotto Usodimare, together with the Venetian Alvise Cadamosto, helped lead expeditions in West Africa for Portugal's Prince Henry the Navigator. In 1492, most of the ships that carried the Jewish refugees away from ports of eastern Spain were owned and captained by Genoese.<sup>11</sup>

The political vicissitudes and new economic opportunities of the sixteenth century also shaped prevailing attitudes and policies with regard to religious minorities. Despite the continued use of the vocabulary of religious polemic, including calls for crusades and sweeping condemnations



of heretics and infidels, medieval attitudes toward religious groups were transforming rapidly. Popes, kings, and their chroniclers still presented the struggle for supremacy in the Mediterranean in religious terms—as an effort to advance or defend the “true” faith against the “infidel.” Yet even the most ardent champions of religious homogeneity were repeatedly forced to modify their expectations. In Iberia, the nominal Catholic unity achieved by the string of conquests, expulsions, and conversions that took place between 1492 and 1502 masked widespread religious distrust and dissent. The integration of former Jews and Muslims into Spanish and Portuguese society remained a major obstacle throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as was the persistence of folk beliefs and religious doubt among the so-called “Old Christians.”<sup>12</sup>

If sixteenth-century rulers were forced to relent and suspend their policies from time to time, such behavior in turn taught a valuable lesson to the minorities at whom these policies were aimed: little in their lives was as stable, permanent, or irrevocable as it might first appear. For the exiled Jews of Spain and Portugal, the shifting sands of fortune emphasized the need to be cautious and vigilant, to dissemble or flee if necessary, and to view the prevailing situation in any given land—be it good or bad—as temporary. So too did they see the political and economic alliances they formed as vital, but provisional, relationships always contingent upon their personal and ever-changing needs and opportunities.

Prior to 1492, Iberian Jews had become practiced in deflecting or minimizing policies that could potentially impinge upon their hard-won privileges or status. They exploited the system of overlapping jurisdictions that characterized medieval society, and regularly challenged the authority of their local Jewish governments. These skills that the Sephardim brought with them into exile provided them with the necessary disposition to survive the trials of Expulsion and forced conversion, and to thrive in the turbulent world of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean. Most Sephardim, including many born into Converso families, clearly felt a strong personal bond to Judaism and to the Jews of the past, present, and future. Yet however strong this sense of religious solidarity may have been, it was only one in a host of factors that determined how the Sephardim of the sixteenth century constructed and managed their communities. As they crisscrossed the Mediterranean from city to city, Jewish refugees joined a motley cast of sixteenth-century people: *renegados* and corsairs, merchants and mercenaries, scholars and fanatics, and adventurers of all kinds. Only by bearing in mind the full scale of the chaos, movement, and calamity that typified life in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean can we make sense of the experience of the Sephardic exiles.

The political volatility of the late medieval and early modern Mediterranean was a central factor in determining the contours of the early Sephardic Diaspora. It required the refugees of 1492 and their descendants to think continually about questions of communal, cultural, and religious identity. How would they present themselves to the authorities—Jewish and non-Jewish—in the towns and cities in which they sought settlement and protection? The most obvious answer to this question was, perhaps, “as Jews.” And yet the reality of the situation was more complex than that. The religious identity of Iberian refugees, unlike that of other Jewish groups expelled from western Europe during the late Middle Ages, was not a foregone conclusion. For Christians of Jewish heritage who fled Spain and Portugal with the intention to live as practicing Jews, the relative dangers and opportunities attached to being Christian or Jewish in different locales forced them to revisit time and again the question of when and where to declare their religious identity. Even those refugees who had always been Jewish soon found themselves confronted with other decisions regarding their ethnic, social, and political affiliations. Did they consider themselves “Spanish” Jews—Sephardim, in the parlance of medieval rabbinic discourse? If so, did such a designation have political ramifications? That is to say, could the Jews from Córdoba, Valencia, and Salamanca be grouped together into “Sephardic” congregations and communities in their new societies, or did the continued relevance of their pre-Expulsion identities prevent such social and political amalgamation? These basic issues associated with the social and political formation of the Sephardic Diaspora form the heart of this book.

### Formation of the Sephardic Diaspora

A key argument of this volume is that Sephardic society was more of a product of the sixteenth century than of the Middle Ages. Prior to their expulsion, Spanish Jews comprised a loosely associated collection of communities with little cohesive identity. The true legacy that the Sephardic refugees brought with them into exile was not a particular Hispano-Jewish identity, as is often assumed,<sup>13</sup> but a series of cultural traits that proved far more important to the construction of their diaspora and to its social, political, and religious structures. These included the highly contested political life of the local Jewish community, the divergent paths of popular and elite religious expression, and the incipient mercantile and intellectual networks between Iberia and the wider Mediterranean world.

If these medieval characteristics were the raw material for the Sephardic Diaspora, it was the general mutability of their new surroundings that would

act as the crucible in which this transnational society was forged. Indeed, the evolution of the Jews of Spain from members of independent communities to a diaspora of Sephardic Jews obliges us to look more closely at the world of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean, and to explore the way in which their experiences led to the establishment of a new set of corporate identities.

I also contend that the Expulsion of 1492 was less a singular event than a long and serpentine process followed by decades of Jewish migration throughout the Mediterranean. Many among the first generation of Jewish exiles from Spain settled in the western Mediterranean and remained tied to the Iberian Peninsula. A major reason for this continued bond with their ancestral homeland was that the exclusion of professing Jews from Spain and Portugal was immediately followed by the military expansion of these kingdoms into the North African lands where many of the Jewish exiles had sought refuge. The royal and ecclesiastical authorities that were so intent on rooting out crypto-Jewish behavior in Spain and Portugal were, in contrast, much more accepting of such activity in their colonial possessions. As had been the case during the Middle Ages, life on these distant frontier zones was always more fluid and provided an opportunity for Jewish social and economic mobility. There, on the distant boundaries of European expansion, Jews and Conversos were welcomed as merchants, translators, and political intermediaries, despite the restrictive policies being promoted in Lisbon, Madrid, and Rome. The establishment of Iberian colonies in North Africa and the Americas provided Sephardic Jews and Conversos an opportunity to reprise the roles their ancestors had played throughout the long centuries of the *reconquista*.

Even for those who found shelter in the Ottoman Empire, the path of Sephardic resettlement was rarely a straight one. Throughout the sixteenth century, generations of Jews of Spanish heritage passed back and forth between Christian and Muslim lands, and often between Christianity and Judaism as well. One of the greatest challenges to the survival and integrity of Jewish society during this long period of movement and communal upheaval was how to reconstruct viable communal structures at a time when so many factors seemed to conspire against them. The nearly constant migration of Jewish merchants and refugees around the Mediterranean posed a serious obstacle to this process, but so did a tendency toward factionalism and a popular disregard for communal authority. This experience of communal instability, rather than the shock of 1492, shaped the way in which Jewish communities organized themselves and related to Jew and Gentile alike.

It was the second and third generations of the exiles of 1492 that began to turn the old rabbinic images of Sepharad into an actual society with

identifiable social and political frameworks. As Jewish leaders struggled to establish local communal institutions, other models of social organization began to form that were, in many ways, more responsive to the new problems and potentialities of Sephardic life. These were the long-distance networks of merchants and rabbis that linked the far-flung settlements of the Sephardic Diaspora. The networks that would come to dominate Sephardic society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had already begun to form in the immediate aftermath of 1492. Their success speaks to the perspicacity of Sephardic merchants in responding to the various challenges of communal life in a time of nearly constant upheaval. And yet, as in the local community, the network model served only a limited role as a means of ordering Jewish society. Throughout this period, the continued instability of Jewish political and economic organization exacerbated the plight of those who inhabited the margins of that society.

The relatively volatile and contentious nature of communal organization also manifested itself in various expressions of religious life in the Sephardic Diaspora. The complex relationship between the Jewish migrants and the members of local Jewish communities in which they settled raised a host of questions regarding piety, honor, and correct modes of religious observance. Perhaps nowhere was this tension clearer than in the widespread suspicions over the religious motives and loyalties of those former Conversos seeking to return openly to Judaism. The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain was a major vehicle for the dissemination of philosophical, mystical, and legal writing throughout the Jewish world. Nonetheless, the religious life in the early Sephardic Diaspora was much more than the sum of its greatest intellectual products. For the Jews of the early modern Mediterranean, religious life continued to be shaped as much by popular religious notions as by rabbinic pronouncements and prohibitions.

As Sephardic social and political institutions slowly took root, the outlines of a general Sephardic identity also began to emerge. These new communal features succeeded in blurring the older lines that had once separated the Jews of different Iberian regions from one another. The development of a new Sephardic identity was augmented by the recognition of cultural differences between the refugees as a group and the native Jews of the lands in which they came to live. Longstanding medieval divisions that traditionally separated Jews of different Iberian regions and cities were of little consequence to the Mustarab, Romaniot, and various Italian communities in which they began to settle. To these communities, the refugees from Spain represented a cohesive group defined by a common fate, and by the common problems they presented to native Jews as a large and foreign immigrant

horde. Rather than present Mediterranean Jewish society at this time as a *Kulturkampf* between Jewish émigrés from Spain and the various communities of Jews among whom they settled, I assert that Sephardic cultural identity was instead a *product* of such encounters, and that it was the shared experience of cultural dislocation that fostered a new unity among the previously disparate groups Iberian Jews and their descendants.

The conventional theme of Hispano-Jewish migration after 1492 is its trajectory from West to East—from Christian Iberia to the Ottoman Empire, and, in a larger sense, from a medieval setting to something new. This standard description of Sephardic history has the Jews leaving Spain and then arriving en masse in the Ottoman Empire. This narrative reads past the entire sixteenth century as an ellipsis, assuming that the formation of the Sephardic Diaspora represents the relocation of an already formed community, rather than the slow and complex creation of that community over several generations. The truth is actually far more complex, and far more interesting.

In recent years, a series of fine books on the Sephardic Diaspora have begun to bring the portrait of early modern Sephardic society into sharper focus. However, these regional studies concentrate on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, picking up the narrative *after* a recognizable Sephardic identity had already emerged. None chronicle the creation of this diaspora society and the various factors that gave it shape.<sup>14</sup>

The intellectual history of the early Sephardic Diaspora—of the way in which the Expulsion of 1492 transformed the mystical, philosophical, and legislative worldview of the refugees and their descendants—is a subject that has been taken up elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> The complexities of these intellectual characteristics and the considerable debates they have engendered remain beyond the purview of this study. Instead, my focus here is on the social and political evolution of this society, and on the subsequent development of a new cultural consciousness. The analysis of this formative period presented here represents an important bridge between studies that trace the path leading up to the Expulsion of 1492 and the various regional studies of later Sephardic society in the early modern period. It challenges some of the popular assumptions about Hispano-Jewish society prior to 1492, as well as those about the way men and women of the Sephardic Diaspora constructed their society. This liminal stage between what we have come to know as the traditional and the modern is characterized by the legacy of Jewish pragmatism and resourcefulness in the face of tremendous adversity, by the tenacious independence of various segments of Jewish society, and by the communal volatility this tendency produced. The story of this difficult passage from the medieval to early modern period, and from Iberian Jews to Sephardim, has much to tell us about the form and function of Jewish society.

## Medieval Inheritance

May thy God endow thee with a new heart and spirit,  
and instill into thee a desire to retrieve the past,  
and to follow the new path henceforward.  
—Judah ibn Tibbon

The *anno mirabilis* of 1492 stands as one of the clearest and most decisive limits between historical epochs. In the span of six months, from January to August of that year, a series of events took place that altered the course of Iberian history and ushered in a new era for the culture of Spain and the rest of Europe. The transformation began on January 2, when Spain's Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, accepted the surrender of the emirate of Granada, bringing to a close more than seven centuries of Muslim political presence in Iberia. The fall of Granada was understood by contemporaries as the culmination of the Hispano-Christian reconquest of the peninsula, and it was rapidly succeeded by two events that, in both a symbolic and a real sense, extended this process of territorial expansion, religious unification, and political centralization. First came the royal decree that all professing Jews were to convert to Christianity or leave Spain by August 2 of that year, ending a tenure in the region that stretched back to the Roman period. On August 3, Christopher Columbus set sail from the small town of Palos on a voyage that would eventually open up a new frontier for

the religious, economic, and political energies of the Catholic Monarchs and their successors.

The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 is so intricately bound up with the other momentous events of that year, and its impact on the history of the Jews was so far-reaching, that it is tempting to take it as the *terminus a quo* for the history of early modern Jewry. As with the fall of Muslim Granada and Columbus's voyage across the Atlantic, the Expulsion of Spanish Jewry exists as a significant boundary between historical eras. It was the last in a long series of expulsions and forced migrations that left the Latin West all but devoid of Jewish communities. Yet any effort to understand the nature and development of the far-flung network of communities that came to form the Sephardic Diaspora must begin prior to that fateful year.

### The Structure of Jewish Society

We might begin our search for the roots of the Sephardic Diaspora by asking just how cohesive was Jewish society in Spain on the eve of its expulsion. Viewed from the standpoint of the Spanish crown, their Jewish subjects appear as a relatively undifferentiated population. In the Edict of Expulsion, Ferdinand and Isabella treated the Jews of their realm as a single group, each member of which was potentially detrimental to the full Christianization of Spanish society. The royal order "to depart and never return" fell upon "all Jews and Jewesses of whatever age they may be who live, reside, and exist in our said kingdoms and lordships, as much as those who are natives as those who are not . . . along with their sons and daughters, menservants and maid-servants, Jewish familiars, those who are great as well as the lesser folk."<sup>1</sup>

The comprehensiveness of this royal proclamation obscures the fact that, despite their common religious heritage and shared fate, the Jews of fifteenth-century Spain represented little more than a loose association of social networks based on family, city, profession, and intellectual bloc. Certainly, Judaism's ancient cultic and legal traditions, together with a host of local customs and practices, governed the rhythms of daily life. Yet, while religious culture formed the essential background of Jewish society, the organizational structures of that society often stemmed from other sources. Here, as in medieval Christian and Muslim societies, the ideal of establishing a religious community bound by a shared moral and legal tradition fell victim to more worldly forces.<sup>2</sup> Thus, while Jews recognized as binding a highly developed legal system and the moral imperatives that came with it, they could also contest the implementation of any aspect of Jewish law that they deemed personally detrimental.

Medieval Sephardic identity, to the extent that it existed at all, was less an organic expression of a unified society than an external category used by the Jewish elite to describe some of the distinct intellectual traditions and religious customs of Iberian Jews. Beginning in the High Middle Ages, a chain of influential Jewish literary figures helped to establish the cultural profile and collective identity of the Jews living in Muslim al-Andalus.<sup>3</sup> Spurred by their Muslim counterparts, who sought to promote their own political and cultural independence from the great Islamic centers of the Middle East and North Africa, Andalusi-Jewish intellectuals began to assert their identity as a people apart. Playing upon a popular Jewish notion associating the Iberian Peninsula with the biblical land of Sepharad, they invoked a verse from the Book of Obadiah to identify themselves as descendants of the elite stratum of ancient Jerusalemite society, the most intellectually accomplished and socially superior community of the Jewish Diaspora.<sup>4</sup>

The practice of touting the greatness of one's own people—be it a dynasty, an urban community, or a “nation” more broadly conceived—was relatively commonplace in the medieval world. Nonetheless, the high quality, diversity, and sheer quantity of the literary output of eleventh- and twelfth-century Andalusi Jewry was such that their claims of intellectual superiority were not easily dismissed. Indeed, they were kept alive by successive generations of Jews as they moved from Muslim al-Andalus to the Christian lands of Castile-Leon, the Crown of Aragon, and southern France.<sup>5</sup>

By attaching themselves to this already established concept of Sepharad, the Jews of Christian Iberia were thus able to lay claim to a proud cultural legacy within the Jewish world while maintaining a strong association with the Iberian cities and kingdoms in which they lived. It must be pointed out, however, that the significance of Sepharad as a marker of Jewish identity remained limited to the realm of intellectual culture. Although Jews throughout the medieval world recognized the existence of a regional Jewish community they termed “Sepharad,” both the geographical borders of this community and its social and political composition remained amorphous.<sup>6</sup> Jews moved freely and regularly between different cities of the Iberian kingdoms and the overseas territories under their control. This mobility helped both to foster important social and economic ties between them and to create a shared cultural milieu.

Sepharad as an idealized intellectual construct has its parallel in the contemporary Christian association of the Iberian Peninsula with “Hispania.” Like Hispania, the medieval concept of Sepharad remained an abstract idea. Even such galvanizing events as the union of Castilian and Aragonese crowns in 1469 and the conquest of Granada in 1492 did not succeed in



replacing the older, regionally based political frameworks. Nor did royal unification produce a sense of belonging in a “national” civic culture. Spain’s older political units of Castile and Aragon continued to function as separate entities with their own laws long past 1492.<sup>7</sup> The Castilian notion of *patria* came to refer to all of Spain, not only to Castile. But with all its evocative power, the conceptual shift did not supersede provincial, local, or civic patriotism. If the actual formation of Spain could not easily erase the local and provincial nature of Iberian identities, it had even less impact on Jewish society, which lacked a rabbinic parallel to the organized and conscious royal push toward centralization. Indeed, the conceptual community of Sepharad produced little in the way of concrete social or political institutions, and at the time of the Expulsion, Iberian Jews still did not think of themselves as a discrete “nation.” Despite the collective identity promoted by Jewish intellectuals, the average Jew would have seen himself as a Toledan, or perhaps a Castilian, much as did his Christian counterpart. Evidence suggests that, in each city, the vernacular language and speech patterns of Iberian Jews closely resembled those of their Christian neighbors.<sup>8</sup> Although Hispano-Jewish authors referred to all forms of Jewish vernacular simply as “foreign” (Hebrew *laʿaz*), their languages, like so much of their culture, varied from one region to another, showing the influences of Castilian, Aragonese, Catalan, and Portuguese.<sup>9</sup>

In any given city, the Jewish community, or *aljama*, existed as a single yet ill-defined collective of Jews dominated by a set of prominent families who did their best to foster a sense of communal order while promoting their own privileged position. The structure of the surrounding Christian society made political cooperation among Jews from different regions tenuous at best. Although Jews shared a religio-legal constitution in the Talmud and its voluminous interpretations and commentaries, the actual limits of Jewish communal organization were often determined by the political boundaries of a particular community’s lord or protector and the functional power of the community’s ruling elite. Furthermore, rabbinic Judaism supported and encouraged the autonomy of each Jewish community. Jews from disparate cities occasionally formed temporary alliances in order to meet the financial burdens of royal taxes, but showed no interest in creating more permanent supra-communal structures. This tendency toward communal independence was reinforced by similar predilections among Christian municipalities, barons, and various ecclesiastical institutions.

In addition to the atomization of Jewish society along regional and local lines, each community was also challenged from within by political dissonance. Although Christian kings universally granted the Jews the right to

juridical autonomy over members of their own communities, Jewish leaders were not always successful in enforcing that autonomy. The problem lay not with Christians seeking to usurp the rights of Jewish judges, but in the tendency of individual Jews to pursue their cases in any and all courts in which they thought they might find success. The common phenomenon of Jews taking their cases before non-Jewish magistrates, often as a means of appealing an unfavorable verdict received at a Jewish court, at once stymied Jewish officials and helped to integrate Jewish litigants into local Christian society.<sup>10</sup>

Within individual kingdoms a number of Iberian monarchs who sought to create strong centralized bureaucracies attempted to establish unified regional networks of Jewish communities, primarily as a means of facilitating tax collection.<sup>11</sup> Yet even this level of unification foundered on the rocks of Jewish factionalism and political rivalry, which were ultimately the greatest impediment to a socio-political expression of Sephardic culture.

In each city, a set of powerful Jewish clans vied with one another for the control of the governing council (*kahal*) of their *aljama*. No single family could effectively dominate its local *kahal* for more than a short time, and none could assert true political authority beyond their home city, but their ranks produced a steady string of royal favorites who rose to positions of great wealth and power. Jews in each community viewed these courtiers with a complex mix of pride, respect, and fear, sentiments that the courtiers were quick to foster. In the Crown of Aragon, fountains and decorative objects purchased with donations from Jewish courtiers were emblazoned with the royal coat of arms.<sup>12</sup> In Toledo, often the home of the peripatetic Castilian court, a synagogue built by the Jewish notable Samuel Ha-Levi also displayed the royal symbols of Castile-Leon. These emblems of royal patronage served a dual purpose. First and foremost they testified to royal authority and to the crown's claim to be the natural lord over all Jews in its realm. Second, the association of these symbols of royal power with individual Jews had the added effect of highlighting the connection of these Jewish benefactors with the royal court, a clear statement to the rest of the Jewish community regarding the courtier's special status.<sup>13</sup>

Yet for all the power and prestige achieved by these courtiers, none could unify the Jews of a whole region under their command. The local Jewish community thus remained the cornerstone of Jewish society in large part because it represented the limit of Jewish power and control. These practical limits and their impact on the development of Jewish political structures point to two factors that are essential to the understanding of the formation of the Sephardic Diaspora in the period after 1492. First, power struggles within Jewish society acted as a system of checks and balances on the governing elite. Competition

for honors and political influence among Jewish leaders, mutual distrust between rival families or intellectual and social factions—even outbreaks of internecine violence—these were all integral to the system of Jewish self-government.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, this system echoed a similar dynamic to be found between the aristocracy and the towns in the broader, Christian society.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, Jews were deeply rooted in the cities of medieval Iberia, and every bit as much a product of their general cultural milieu as the product of Jewish law and custom. Second, the stratification and factionalism of Jewish society meant that the Jews who entered exile together in the summer of 1492 were a highly atomized and independent-minded group. Indeed, they were not a group, *per se*, but a set of families and intellectual and professional networks more accustomed to challenging the authority of their rabbis and communal councillors than to demonstrations of social and political solidarity. As we shall see, factionalism within the Jewish community survived long after 1492 and became a significant obstacle to the establishment of political frameworks within the Sephardic Diaspora. The eventual creation, in the sixteenth century, of Jewish polities in the Mediterranean that presented themselves as “Sephardic” was less a continuation of older, medieval traditions than an invention born of new contexts and exigencies.

### The Structure of Jewish Religious Culture

In the last decades before their expulsion, the religious culture of Iberian Jewry was also quite divided and compartmentalized. The various schools and circles (*huggim*) of Jewish intellectuals generally had little impact on the lives of average Jews. The Jewish poor, the artisans and petty lenders who made up the bulk of Jewish society, had no interest in the major points of contention among the Jewish intelligentsia, such as the ongoing debates over the esoteric nature of sacred literature, or the permissibility of the study of philosophical texts. At times, however, the conflicts surrounding these academic debates spilled over into the public sphere.<sup>16</sup> The wealthy, the learned, and the governing councilmen of a given Jewish community were overlapping groups, and disputes in one area of Jewish life often had an effect on others. Scholars or prominent merchants who were either permanently or temporarily outside the official government structure also found ways of asserting their authority. Some exercised power by creating communal institutions that technically existed under the direction of the local governing council, but that often enjoyed a conveniently autonomous status within the community. These included confraternal societies that acted as welfare organizations, and committees known as *berure averot* that were charged with the

oversight of moral conduct.<sup>17</sup> In other instances, Jewish elders were asked for their opinion on decisions affecting the community. This was often the case for Jewish scholars, whose role in the governance of Jewish communities was important but irregular.<sup>18</sup> Experts in Jewish law might be considered the pride of their community, but they held no formal political post. Nonetheless, the line that divided scholars from communal officials could be temporarily dissolved when study circles or other informal associations of scholars and students involved themselves in matters of communal governance. At times this involvement resulted from a request by the *kahal* when it found itself in need of the authority of the rabbis, or of their participation in ad hoc legal tribunals.<sup>19</sup> In other instances, rabbis sought to establish a more permanent place for themselves within the process of Jewish government by arguing that communal decisions should be buttressed by the approval of leading scholars.<sup>20</sup>

That the lines between politics and religion could be blurred to such an extent by communal committees and intellectual circles illustrates how complex and often combustible Jewish self-government in medieval Iberia could be. In addition to the ongoing competition among leading Jewish clans over political authority and the equally entrenched conflicts among Jewish intellectuals over questions of religious observance, there also existed nearly perennial tensions between these overlapping groups of the Jewish oligarchy and the Jews they sought to govern.

The relationship between the Jewish masses and those who acted as their moral and spiritual leaders was inherently oppositional. Iberian rabbis generally saw themselves more as disciplinarians than as shepherds kindly tending to their flocks, and some both feared and derided their audiences. In their sermons, rabbis complained about their congregants' lack of respect for religious leaders, and openly admired the authority and honor granted to their Christian counterparts.<sup>21</sup> The Jewish moralist Solomon Alami, who witnessed the devastating effects of 1391, remained somewhat awed by Christian religious zeal. In a classic call for greater ethical conduct among Iberian Jews, Alami described the Christians' attitudes toward their own religious leaders with a mixture of praise and envy. He noted that when Christians gathered to hear a sermon, they stood in silence, open to the words of the preacher. The Jews, in contrast, chattered throughout the sermons of their scholars and neglected the religious education of their children. "The Christian princes and barons rival one another in efforts to promote and uphold their religion, and to train their youth in the pious sentiments of their ancestors," he exclaimed. "The rich of our community despise their faith, and permit the teachers of religion to eat the bread of sorrow and poverty."<sup>22</sup>

The latitude afforded the Christian clergy fascinated their Jewish counterparts, who marveled at the fact that the priests were able to rebuke the piety of the Christian nobility. The respect Christians had for ecclesiastics contrasted sharply with the contempt with which Jews regarded their own scholars. One leading Jewish preacher noted with envy: "Their nobles pride themselves on [observing] the commandment of charity and their scholars are gracious to one another. With us, it is the opposite."<sup>23</sup> Thus Jews were able to admire the status and intellectual achievements of Christian clerics even as they rejected their religious convictions.

When they were not complaining about the general impiety and disrespect of the Jewish masses, Jewish preachers and scholars were often at odds with one another. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, wandering Jewish preachers concerned Jewish communal officials in much the same way that their Christian counterparts troubled local Church authorities. Although the numbers, organization, and influence of Jewish preachers never approached that of their Christian peers, they nonetheless had a significant presence within Jewish society. Jewish preachers could be found delivering sermons in the synagogue and at special occasions such as weddings and birth celebrations. Preachers required no formal training and held no particular office. Their success derived from personal charisma and oratory skill rather than from the extensive legal and philosophical training of rabbinic study circles. One scholar observed with a measure of pique that these wandering preachers held forth "as if communal leaders or great chiefs." He further lamented, "A cult of preachers now springs up each day, who recite their homilies and wander on."<sup>24</sup> Jewish communal leaders were not the only ones to bristle at the activities of these preachers. The regular exhortations to greater piety and morality that were the central focus of many Jewish sermons were often as poorly received by their audiences as were the missionary harangues of Christian friars.

### The Long Shadow of 1391

Of all the divisions within Hispano-Jewish society, perhaps the most profound was that which arose in the wake of the widespread riots and forced conversions of 1391. The cataclysmic events of that year and the continued conversions to Christianity that took place during the succeeding generation represented a major transformation both in the composition of Iberian Jewry and in its relationship to the surrounding Christian society.<sup>25</sup> Before 1391, voluntarily Jewish conversions to Christianity in the Spanish kingdoms had been limited and sporadic. In a few celebrated cases, the converts went on to

become leading polemicists against their former religion. Yet, these were the exceptions that proved the rule. For the most part, Jews who accepted baptism before 1391 never constituted a major social phenomenon, and they had little impact on the general *modus vivendi* of Christians and Jews.<sup>26</sup>

The mass conversions of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries permanently shifted this paradigm. Zealous preachers such as Ferrant Martínez, the Archdeacon of Ecija and one of the instigators of the riots, had given little thought to how the Christian municipalities were to accommodate the masses of neophytes, nor was the Church better prepared. For those Jews who survived, the scope of the conversions was such that the previously common practice of dismissing the apostates as impious traitors was no longer feasible. Leading rabbinic figures of the day such as Isaac ben Sheshet Perfet and Simon ben Zemach Duran, both of whom escaped to North Africa during the riots of 1391, articulated what would become the standard rabbinic attitude regarding the Jewishness of the converts. They considered the *Conversos* to be *anusim*, literally “forced ones,” who had accepted Christianity against their will and thus were still to be considered Jewish.<sup>27</sup> The practical and emotional obstacles to the Christianization of the early *Conversos* led to widespread confusion over their religious status within both Jewish and Christian society.

Despite royal and ecclesiastical efforts to separate *Conversos* and Jews, the two groups remained linked in the popular imagination as well as by ties of blood, cultural heritage, and religious ideology. As so-called Old Christians began to agitate against the *Conversos* for what they saw as their unwillingness to abandon Judaism completely, their antipathy came to encompass professing Jews. The popular conviction that Jews actively encouraged Jewish ritual observance among New Christians became pervasive long before the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition in 1480. Suspicions of *Converso* heresy, as well as resentment toward any evidence of their social mobility, led to legal and physical attacks against them and Jews alike. From the 1440s to the 1480s, a series of anti-*Converso* policies and outbursts of violence led to waves of emigration from the peninsula.<sup>28</sup> Christian fears of the Jewish influence on *Conversos* were not wholly unfounded. Whether Jews were swayed by rabbinic arguments for the Jewishness of the converts or were simply unwilling to sever ties to their friends and family members who had become Christian, many continued to treat the *Conversos* as Christians in name only.<sup>29</sup>

These bonds of mutual benefit between Jews and *Conversos*, built upon sympathy, understanding, and kinship ties, are only part of the complicated legacy of 1391. One of the most devastating results of the unprecedented wave

of forced conversions of that year was its effect on the morale of the surviving Jews. In the succeeding decades, many were so disheartened that they accepted baptism willingly. This trend continued up through a long public disputation held at Tortosa over the course of 1413 and 1414, which, though it ultimately failed to convert the remainder of Iberian Jewry, did convince more than a few to accept Christianity.<sup>30</sup> As a result of the continued existence and even expansion of Converso society, the act of conversion lost some of its stigma among Iberian Jews. Nor was the prospect of abandoning one's religion as forbidding as it had been prior to 1391. Neophytes could now join family members, neighbors, and others who shared their cultural roots rather than depend upon the mercy and understanding of Christian institutions. The sheer number of Conversos and the various kinship ties between them and Iberian Jews were not the only factors that made the idea of conversion less daunting. The prevalence of crypto-Judaism among the Conversos also raised the possibility that a Jew could adopt Christianity and still remain in some sense Jewish.

The scope and disputed nature of Converso society caused a major shift in the Christian image of the Jews, as well as in the functioning of the Hispano-Jewish society. If some Christians found the phenomenon of crypto-Judaism repugnant on ideological grounds, others were troubled by the practical implications of such transgressions. Many were disturbed by the social and political effects of a community of nominal Christians whose social and religious loyalties still lay with the Jews. By the mid-fifteenth century, distrust of Conversos' fidelity to their new religion and jealousy over their position within Christian society combined to produce new theories regarding the indelible nature of their Jewish ancestry. In 1449, anti-Converso riots in Toledo were followed by the promulgation of municipal statutes regarding the so-called purity of blood (*Estatutos de limpieza de sangre*) aimed at excluding Conversos from public office on the basis of their Jewish bloodlines.<sup>31</sup>

The Spanish idea of blood purity, which only fully developed in the sixteenth century, exemplifies how Christians began to imagine and categorize Jews in new ways as Europe transitioned from the medieval to the early modern period.<sup>32</sup> The intensification of Christian complaints regarding the persistent Jewishness of the Conversos over the course of the fifteenth century had little to do with belief in an inherent potency of Jewish blood. Rather, those Christians who saw the Jewish converts and their offspring as insincere were drawing upon much older anti-Jewish themes. In most cities, the prevailing attitude was that Jews were bound to be false converts due to their obstinacy and avarice, not their blood. This characterization of Jewish perfidy grew out of longstanding theological and cultural calumnies that began in the ancient



world and developed over the course of the Middle Ages. Indeed, both the creation of the Spanish Inquisition and its ultimate recommendation to expel the Jews hinged on the belief that the inherent "Jewishness" of the Conversos was *not* biological and could be overcome given sufficient vigilance and the proper social conditions.

Nor were negative attitudes toward the Conversos limited to Christian society. Modern scholars have devoted much attention, perhaps rightly so, to the Christian obsession with "Judaizing," or the practice and promotion of crypto-Judaism, and the institution of the Spanish Inquisition that it helped to create. However, the existence of hostile Christian attitudes should not overshadow the fact that many Jews also harbored deep feelings of anger and mistrust with regard to the Conversos. Within Hispano-Jewish society, the initial sympathy for the fate of the Conversos soon became mixed with feelings of resentment and betrayal. Many of Spain's remaining Jews expressed the attitude that some Conversos chose to become or remain Christian for fundamentally materialistic reasons. Already in the early fifteenth century, the idea that Conversos had accepted baptism as a means toward an easier life, rather than as a result of Christian pressure or true religious belief, had become widespread among peninsular Jews. In an open letter exploring the motivation behind continued Jewish conversions after 1391, Rabbi Joshua Halorki gave voice to these Jewish feelings of suspicion and resentment. Among the possible reasons why a Jew would choose to convert, Halorki included lust for wealth, social position, the freedom to consort with Gentile women, and the prospects of a life free from fear and persecution. Dismissing such temporal motivations with regard to the conversion of his own former teacher, Halorki nonetheless preserves the idea that some Jews were, indeed, attracted by the greater opportunities afforded by nominal Christian identity.<sup>33</sup>

Over the course of the fifteenth century, Jewish distrust of Converso religious conviction remained strong, paralleling and perhaps reinforced by similar Christian attitudes. The purity of one's lineage and cultural heritage became increasingly important to Iberian Jews during the fifteenth century as they attempted to distinguish between Jews and Conversos. Some Jews began to style themselves as being "faithful, decent and kosher," or "of a good family."<sup>34</sup> Jewish bitterness over the perceived opportunism of the Conversos finally burst forth in the immediate aftermath of 1492. The spate of conversions that took place in the few months between the promulgation of the edict in late March and its execution in August fanned the flames of resentment and feelings of abandonment among those Jews who had accepted the burden of exile.



Isaac Abravanel's account of Ferdinand II's decision to expel the Jews is telling in this regard. The great Jewish courtier writes that the king declared:

I say to all the families of the house of Israel, that if you are baptized and pray and worship to the god of the other nations, you will eat of the best land as I do today, and you will dwell in the land and trade in it. However, if you refuse and rebel and do not wish to make mention of my god, you are to go out from the midst of my people, from the lands of Spain, Sicily, Mallorca, and Sardinia which are under my rule, and within three months there is not to remain a single Jew in my realm.<sup>35</sup>

For Abravanel, the decision set before the Jews was not so much between competing religious systems as between material prosperity and the pain of exile. Another contemporary Jewish chronicler, Abraham Zacuto, offered an even harsher assessment of those who chose conversion. Zacuto was a rabbi and leading mathematician and astronomer who was forty years old at the time of the Expulsion. He had taught at Christian universities in his native Salamanca as well as in Cartagena and Zaragoza before accepting exile in Portugal, where he served as royal astronomer at the court of João II. His travels through Iberia, followed by an escape to North Africa and Jerusalem, gave Zacuto a privileged vantage point from which to observe Hispano-Jewish society during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In his chronicle of that turbulent time, Zacuto criticizes his fellow Jews for impiety and disregard for religious leadership. Writing on the great fourteenth-century sage Jacob ben Asher, whose legal code *Arba'ah Turim* remained one of the most cherished religious texts that the refugees brought with them into exile, he laments that the "the community of Toledo did not support him adequately [and] he languished in poverty for most of his life."<sup>36</sup> Zacuto similarly disparages those Jews who accepted baptism during the tragedies of 1391. While he considered the death of Ben Asher and his family to be defiant acts of martyrdom in the face of conversion, he saw the similar fates suffered by the rank and file among the Jewish communities as divine punishment for their sins:

The population rose up against the Jews, killed them with the sword, seized their children and their women, and carried them off to sea to sell them. Over four thousand changed their faith. According to tradition, these sufferings were the just punishment of divine wrath. For many had taken Gentile women into their homes; children were born of the illicit unions, and they later killed their own fathers.<sup>37</sup>

Zacuto's grim and somewhat exaggerated account of the events of 1391, to which he was not an eyewitness, must be read as a pronouncement against the religious laxity of his own generation. Finally, in addition to these condemnations of spiritual weakness and feelings of social and economic jealousy, the advent of an expanded and royally directed office of the Inquisition in 1480 also made the maintenance of such bonds inherently more dangerous. Technically, the Holy Office had jurisdiction over Christians only. However, this did not stop many of the more aggressive inquisitors from hounding professing Jews they suspected of promoting crypto-Jewish behavior.

The relationship between Jews and Conversos in the decades leading up to 1492 was a mix of solidarity and enmity, often hinging on the needs, fears, and other personal characteristics of the individuals involved.<sup>38</sup> This complex set of Jewish attitudes with regard to the Conversos followed the Jews into exile. For some, kinship ties and sympathy continued to inform and soften their attitudes toward the Conversos. For others, however, the tragedy of 1492 replaced that of 1391 as the shared cultural trauma that defined their lives. For many of the latter group, the Conversos who stayed behind in Iberia were increasingly seen as having turned their back on Judaism.

### The Place of the Jews in Christian Society

The relationship of Iberian Jewry to its Christian host society is typically represented as a downward spiral leading from the intercultural coexistence, or "Convivencia," of the High Middle Ages inexorably toward persecution, exclusion, and expulsion in the fifteenth century.<sup>39</sup> However, such broad strokes conceal much of the texture of Jewish life in Christian Iberia. From the eleventh century on, the Christian kingdoms of Portugal, Castile-Leon, and Catalonia-Aragon steadily expanded and consolidated their power in the peninsula. The corresponding ebb of Muslim political dominances in the region is traditionally understood as part of a process of Christian reconquest and resettlement, terms that assume a natural and perhaps inevitable place for the region within the bounds of Christendom.<sup>40</sup> But while fighting between Christians and Muslims was often supported by the language of holy war, the long centuries of reconquest were also marked by internecine fighting within both camps. Christian kings accepted Muslims as allies and vassals whose military and monetary support were used to fuel warfare against other Christian lords. Iberian churches were at the mercy of ambitious monarchs who, under the pretext of fighting the "infidel," would redirect ecclesiastical funds toward their own personal endeavors. Relations between Iberian Christians and Muslims thus varied greatly from year to year, and from

one part of the peninsula to another. Tensions between them often ran high, particularly in the frontier zones of the south, which remained highly volatile even after the Christian conquest of Granada in 1492.<sup>41</sup>

Jewish fortunes rose and fell upon these same turbulent seas. As a politically neutral and easily controlled minority, Jews were given opportunities to act as diplomats and translators for Christian lords. They also benefited from Christian military and economic successes. Jewish merchants traded in captured Muslim slaves, and they followed Catalan maritime expansion into the Mediterranean. As the Christian dominions expanded, Jews became increasingly involved in loaning money to settlers and great barons alike. Though most Jews continued to eke out a meager living as artisans and petty traders, wealthy and influential Jewish families could be found in nearly every major town from Lisbon to Barcelona. In addition to these larger urban centers, Jews also flourished in those recently conquered frontier zones that were in desperate need of merchants, artisans, bankers, and civil servants. These new lands offered both economic opportunities and a measure of personal social and political autonomy, due to the slow development of Jewish communal institutions. From the late thirteenth century onward, Christian settlement and the eventual emergence of Jewish communal governments began, respectively, to restrict and to regulate Jewish life in the new territories. Throughout Christian Iberia, in the older Jewish settlements as well as the new, Jews became an important feature of urban life.

Jews remained a distinct group in each city, and social and religious tensions with their Christian neighbors often erupted into violence. However, such differences did not lead to insularity. Indeed, even the frequent and strident opposition to interreligious contact by both Christian and Jewish leaders failed to deter Jews from integrating into their host society in a number of ways. Jews formed business associations with their Christian neighbors, ate, drank, and socialized with them, and exchanged ideas with one another. Active, and at times aggressive, blurring of the boundaries set up to separate members of different religions became a leitmotif of Iberian Jewish history.<sup>42</sup> With the exception of 1391, attacks against Jews were generally localized to one city or region. Anti-Jewish legislation differed according to kingdom, and often by city, and was enforced with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

Over the course of the late Middle Ages, Jewish leaders developed a way of working with Christian authorities that helped to integrate Jews into the developing administrative systems of the various Iberian kingdoms.<sup>43</sup> This integration was encouraged by two fundamental factors: royal assertion of sovereignty over all Jews in a given kingdom, and royal recognition of the fiscal and administrative utility of the Jews to the crown. Iberian Jews thus

could enjoy fairly extensive rights, but their status was generally delimited by the broader needs of the crown at any given moment, and at times the underlying precariousness of their situation became dramatically manifest.<sup>44</sup>

While a formal system of royal grants of rights and protections to individual Jewish communities provided a large measure of political stability, it was not inviolate. Indeed, although the lordship of Iberian monarchs was relatively benevolent, especially by medieval European standards, it could also be capricious, and thus required nearly constant attention from Jewish courtiers and communal officials. In addition to more formal negotiations of communal rights, the practice of securing royal protection as well as personal exemptions and favors through bribery was always part of the relationship between the Jews and their Christian sovereigns.

The point here is not to gauge the “true” attitudes and behavior of Christian society with regard to the Jews, nor to argue that Jews weathered difficult periods with equanimity. Anti-Jewish sentiment was widespread in medieval Iberia and could easily be inflamed to devastating effect. Similarly, Jews understood their fate to be bound up with their coreligionists throughout the peninsula, and those living in a given city kept a close watch on events in nearby regions. If we can identify a long-term impact that Jewish-Christian relations had on Hispano-Jewish life in those final decades prior to 1492, it might be that Jews became increasingly aware of the loopholes, safe havens, and necessity of maintaining close ties with powerful lords. These relationships were far from perfect, and the kings of Portugal, Aragon, and Castile were not always good lords. John I of Aragon, during whose reign (1387–96) the Jews suffered the massacres and conversions of 1391, was quick to remind his Jews that their lives and wellbeing were dependent upon the monarch’s “humanity and piety.”<sup>45</sup> The volatility of royal attitudes notwithstanding, the Jews had little alternative but to depend on the crown for justice and support. They would retain their pragmatic faith in royal protection even after their expulsion.

It is tempting to chart the various outbreaks of violence and anti-Jewish decrees along a chronological line leading back from 1492. However, it does not appear that medieval Jews read these events with the same sense of foreboding. Violence against Jews, both latent and manifest, was a disturbing but nonetheless endemic part of medieval life, plaguing every generation of Jews. Like all medieval peoples, the Jews sought to limit their exposure to such attacks, but accepted their lot with a pragmatic mix of active defense, patience, and resignation. Jews looked upon secular and ecclesiastical rulers alike as potential protectors and lobbied them to guarantee and safeguard Jewish rights. In medieval Iberia, these efforts proved successful on

the whole. Anti-Jewish laws appeared with increased frequency from the thirteenth century onward, but they were inconsistently enforced and often overturned or ignored with the ascension of new rulers. At other times, those with sufficient wealth and influence could purchase exemptions for themselves with financial “gifts” or the payment of special “fines.”

Were it not for the mass conversions of 1391 and the consequent existence of an inassimilable community of Conversos throughout the Crown of Aragon and Castile, the Expulsion of 1492 might not have taken place. The rupture of 1391 can be viewed either as a particularly severe manifestation of the persecuting mentality of the medieval West, or as a singular cataclysm that forever altered the otherwise stable course of interfaith relations in Iberia. What seems clear, however, is that the Expulsion of 1492 was inextricably bound up with the long-standing problems created by the mass conversions of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Indeed, Iberian Jewry had slowly recovered from the massacres and destruction of property it had suffered during the riots of the late fourteenth century. Throughout the peninsula, the shattered communities had fought their way back toward economic and political stability.<sup>46</sup> Such resilience notwithstanding, they could not overcome the lasting impact of the conversions. New Christians did not suddenly change professions with their change of religion, and thus they retained many of the positions within Spanish society traditionally accepted by Jews, weakening the economic prospects for what remained of Iberian Jewry. In taking Jewish jobs, the Conversos began to threaten the utility and thus the basic *raison d'être* of their former relatives. The rise of an urban Christian middle class had already begun to supplant and marginalize many Iberian Jews, repeating a process that had taken place throughout the rest of Latin Europe.<sup>47</sup> By the late fourteenth century, the economic diversity and social mobility that had characterized Jewish society in previous centuries had begun to wane as Jews became increasingly relegated to the role of small-scale moneylenders. The rise of Converso society in the fifteenth century further eroded Jewish participation in civil service and trade. Still, this was not the biggest hurdle that the New Christians posed to their Jewish neighbors. It was the suspected role of Iberian Jews in “Judaizing” the converts and their descendants that sealed the fate of medieval Europe’s last great Jewish community.

During the fifteenth century, the crowns of Castile and Aragon vigorously yet ineffectively attempted to achieve the same goals of separation that had failed for nearly two centuries. The reasons behind this failure are many and complex, but can be reasonably summed up with the following crucial observation: there were simply too many people, Jews and Christian alike,

who continued to find social and economic interaction across religious lines to be valuable. Attempts to enforce separation between Jews and Christians had the support of most rabbis and many Jewish communal officials, but their leadership once again proved unable to counter the will of the Jewish populace.<sup>48</sup> As already noted, Jews and Conversos continued to be linked by strong social and familial ties. But perhaps most importantly, Jews continued to interact with all Christians as they had always done: entering into business alliances, learning from one another, and forming strong and mutually beneficial social bonds across the religious divide. For all the opposition to these relationships and the increased tensions created by the existence of the Conversos, many still desired to carry on as they always had.

### Jewish Ties to the Broader Mediterranean

A final observation about the structure of Iberian Jewry prior to 1492 should be made with regard to their relationship to the Mediterranean lands that were destined to become their home after the Expulsion. In addition to their integration into the Iberian society in which they lived, Jews also maintained important contacts to the broader Mediterranean world. Throughout the medieval period, Iberian Jews connected with the world beyond their peninsular home primarily through trade. During the late Middle Ages, the mercantile activity of Iberian Jews became diminished in comparison with that of their Christian counterparts. Nonetheless, long-distance trade remained an important feature of Jewish economic life. Jews from all over the Crown of Aragon as well as Portugal and Castile communicated with the Mediterranean entrepôts of Mallorca, Italy, North Africa, and the Levant via the port cities of Cataluña and Valencia.<sup>49</sup> As in their native cities in the Spanish kingdoms, the fortunes of Iberian Jews in the Mediterranean followed the general course of the Christian society in which they lived. By the fifteenth century, the Crown of Aragon had abandoned most of its political and mercantile interests in North Africa and begun to focus its energies on the Christian Mediterranean. As a result, the trade and settlement patterns of Jewish merchants and migrants from eastern Iberia began to turn toward Italy. This shift was somewhat offset by the subsequent rise in commercial contacts between Castilian Jews and the Maghreb, particularly via the Andalusian ports of Seville, Cadiz, and El Puerto de Santa Maria.<sup>50</sup>

The commercial networks established by Hispano-Jewish merchants provided them with more than just a means for economic gain. They also helped to forge social and political ties to other Jewish communities, as well as to non-Jewish authorities, in a variety of regions around the Mediterranean.

These connections in turn facilitated Jewish migration to and from Iberia throughout the Middle Ages, and they came to be particularly important for Jewish survival during the tumultuous periods immediately following 1391 and 1492.<sup>51</sup> During these waves of voluntary and forced migration, respectively, the established trade routes that connected peninsular cities to those of Mallorca, southern Italy, North Africa, and the Levant developed into paths of Jewish emigration from Iberia.

Economic ties to a variety of foreign cities and territories also necessitated the development of political relationships with foreign lords. Jewish authors recognized the importance of Jewish courtiers and other intercessors for the survival of the Jews in general, arguing that one of the essential characteristics for a Jewish leader was that he be held in esteem by the non-Jewish government.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, even the considerable skill and experience of Jewish representatives at the Spanish royal court could not prevent the Expulsion of 1492. Isaac Abravanel, a model of the nomadic Jewish courtier, explained that he did all that he could to reverse the decree, but to no avail:

At the time [of the decree] I was in the king's court. I was exhausted from calling unto him until my throat became hoarse. I met with the king three times, begging him: "Save us, o king. Impose a large payment on us of gold and silver and every Jew will pay for his land." I called upon all my friends who were close to the king, asking them to intercede before him with all their might, so that the decree to destroy all the Jews might be rescinded. But he remained completely deaf to my entreaties and did not respond to my plea.<sup>53</sup>

Abravanel's failure to annul the Edict of Expulsion notwithstanding, the basic features of advocacy listed here, including bribery and close relations with non-Jewish authorities, would remain indispensable techniques employed by Jewish courtiers in a wide variety of settings throughout the next century.

The nature of these ties to the Mediterranean highlights some notable points about Hispano-Jewish society in the period leading up to 1492. First, it is more accurate to speak of certain sectors of Jewish society being connected to the broad Mediterranean world than to imagine such bonds to be a characteristic of Jewish society in general. Jewish courtiers played important diplomatic roles that brought them into contact with the Muslim rulers of Granada and North Africa, and Jewish merchants fostered social as well as economic relationships with Jews in Muslim and Christian lands. For the majority of Iberian Jewry, however, the Jewish communities of North Africa, Italy, and the Levant were less familiar than the Christians among whom

they lived. Few engaged in long-distance travel. Those seeking permission to travel beyond their home kingdom often had to leave behind their families and a certain amount of goods as surety that they would continue paying their local taxes. In addition to leaving behind one's household, travel also required a special writ of safe conduct that was not so easy to obtain.<sup>54</sup> As a result, mobility between Iberian kingdoms and beyond the peninsula was generally the privilege of wealthier Jews who had both the necessary connections and the means to purchase these writs. Their ability to travel across borders in order to attend weddings and to carry out other family business tended to reinforce ties among elite Jewish clans, rather than between communities.<sup>55</sup>

That a direct relationship to the Mediterranean world beyond the Iberian Peninsula only engaged particular sectors of Jewish society also underscores the compartmentalized nature of the Jewish community. In addition to the political and intellectual factions mentioned above, medieval Jewish society was also built upon a series of economic and social networks. While some Iberian Jews retained trade contacts with other Mediterranean cities, particularly those in nearby North Africa, many must have viewed such lands as every bit as foreign and exotic as did their Christian counterparts throughout Europe. The sense of detachment from other Jewish centers of the Mediterranean is reflected in Halorki's open letter of the early fifteenth century:

[It] is well-known amongst us from the travelogues of those who have journeyed the length and breadth of the world, or from the letters of Maimonides of blessed memory, or from the accounts of merchants who voyage across the seas—that at present most of our people are to be found in the lands of Babylonia and Yemen, where the exiles of Jerusalem settled first, besides the exiles of Samaria who today are as numerous as the sands on the seashore and who sell in the lands of Persia and Media. Some of these exiles live under the dominion of a king who is called the sultan of Babylonia and of the Ishmaelites, some in districts where the yoke of no other is upon them such as those who live on the border of the lands of the Cushites which is called al-Habash adjacent to the Edomite prince named Prester John.<sup>56</sup>

Notwithstanding Halorki's muddling of biblical and medieval geography, his message is nonetheless clear. The demographic center of the Jewish world was, as it had always been, in the lands of the Near East. Arguing against the notion that the rapidly dwindling Jewries of Europe represented the bulk of the world's Jewish population, Halorki underscores the widespread



popularity of such a parochial vision. Clearly, detailed knowledge of Jewish communities in the far-off lands of the East was not particularly common outside the circles of long-distance merchants and well-informed intellectuals. Even those Jews who might have had some sense of the scope and complexity of the Jewish world did not necessarily identify with their coreligionists in these distant and exotic lands.

The provincial worldview of most Iberian Jews began to fade over the course of the fifteenth century, as small groups of émigrés joined the long-distance merchants in the Mediterranean. Compared to the waves of Jews and Conversos who left Iberia after 1492, the number who fled the region in the century following 1391 was relatively small, a difference that greatly facilitated the task of resettlement. Some of these émigrés reached as far as the eastern Mediterranean, settling among the Romaniot (Greek-speaking) Jews of Anatolia and the Balkans, and rapidly integrated into the local communities there. A document from the island of Crete from 1440 lists five of the twenty-six leaders of the Jewish community of Candia as being of Spanish origin.<sup>57</sup> The small number of Iberian Jews who settled in places such as Candia facilitated their assimilation into the local Romaniot community, taking on local culture and traditions. In other parts of the Romaniot world, however, Jewish settlers from various parts of the Iberian and Italian peninsulas had already come to outnumber the indigenous Greek-speaking Jews by the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>58</sup> In such cases, the newcomers overwhelmed the local community and established their own culture as the new norm. Though still relatively rare, this phenomenon foreshadowed the process that would become increasingly commonplace during the sixteenth century, when the arrival of much larger groups of Spanish and Portuguese Jews permanently altered the cultural landscape of that region.

In addition to the Jews and Conversos who had fled Christian territories in the calamitous decades after 1391, a stream of Jewish settlers from Iberia began to arrive in North Africa in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. This new wave of migration began following anti-Converso attacks in 1473 and continued during the 1480s with the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition and the subsequent expulsion of the Jews from the Castilian region of Andalusia.<sup>59</sup> As Spanish forces began to push their way southward toward Málaga and Granada, Jews from these cities joined the ranks of the dispossessed Muslims heading for refuge in Morocco and Algiers.<sup>60</sup> The bonds across the Strait of Gibraltar remained in place throughout the fifteenth century. Refugees in North Africa continued to trade with Jews of their former cities, and rabbinic courts continued to adjudicate cases regarding the disposal of émigrés' property. Thus, in the decades leading up to 1492, the

Jews and Conversos who had fled Iberian kingdoms maintained important social and mercantile links to their former communities.<sup>61</sup> In many ways, those who used these Mediterranean trade routes as paths for migration and resettlement represent the true onset of the Sephardic Diaspora. While Jews of Iberian origin had settled in the mercantile centers of the Mediterranean since the Andalusi period, the relatively steady emigration of Jews and Conversos between 1391 and 1492 represents a new phase in this longstanding process.

## Conclusion

As we search for the roots of the Sephardic Diaspora, it is tempting to accept the collective identity of the Jews as reflected in the Edict of Expulsion, and to imagine Jewish society of medieval Iberia as a relatively unified entity. However, this approach overlooks important features of that society, features that would later determine the initial form of the Sephardic Diaspora and the way that it came to function. Perhaps chief among these was the amorphous structure of the Jewish community. Hispano-Jewish society was characterized by a loose association of local polities that were themselves riven by internal fissures among various factions and families. These tensions and mutual suspicions also pervaded the relationships among the rabbinic elite, popular preachers, and the general Jewish populace that both groups sought to guide.

Although various factions contended for the leadership of Iberia's Jewish communities throughout the late medieval period, no single group emerged as the primary authority. The result was a coalition of interdependent groups that included wealthy merchants, scholars, and courtiers, the majority of whom derived from the same strata of elite families. A small handful of courtiers and eminent scholars attained positions that transcended their cities of residence, the former being aided by centralizing tendencies of the royal court, while the latter depended upon their own personal, charismatic authority and the general recognition of their position as guardians of Jewish tradition. In all instances, both at the local and the supraregional level, competition from within their own ranks as well as from these other sectors of Jewish government acted as a control on the relative influence of each group.<sup>62</sup>

Recognition of this internal complexity of the medieval Iberian *aljama* is important for two reasons. First, it emphasizes that the reorganization of communal life in the early Sephardic Diaspora was not the product of a natural solidarity inherited from the Middle Ages. Rather, the creation of a

diaspora society and of the social and political building blocks upon which it stood took place in spite of this propensity to resist unification and centralizing authority. Second, the identification of the normative Hispano-Jewish community as a set of overlapping and highly contested relationships among individuals allows a greater appreciation of the individuality and effective pragmatism of the exiles. As we shall see, the same fractious tendencies that were such an obstacle to Jewish self-government, social organization, and standardization of religious norms would also play an important role in the survival of the Sephardim during their turbulent passage into exile. Other elements of Hispano-Jewish society also persisted after 1492. The Jews' ties to their surrounding culture, which included an ambivalent relationship to the Conversos and a persistent faith in the efficacy of royal protection, would continue to shape the internal composition of the Sephardic community as it transitioned into Diaspora. Of particular importance in this regard was the expansion of mercantile routes that connected Iberian Jews to the wider Mediterranean world into channels of emigration. Still, it was the ability to draw from their communities the necessary services and protections that best benefited them as individuals, often while blunting the authority of the communal elite, that was perhaps the most durable and influential feature of Hispano-Jewish society that the exiles of 1492 bequeathed to their descendants.

## The Long Road into Exile

Behold we perish, we die, we are all perishing.

—Numbers 17:12

The passage of Iberian Jewry from West to East was neither immediate nor direct. Whereas some of the refugees of 1492 were able to find safe haven in the eastern Mediterranean, the vast majority spent the rest of their lives amid a succession of tribulations in Portugal, North Africa, and Italy. Many years passed before the children and grandchildren of those expelled from Spain were able to make the burgeoning cities of the Ottoman Empire the center of the Sephardic world. Perhaps more importantly, the instability of those first, turbulent decades following 1492 had a decisive impact on the identity of succeeding generations of Sephardic Jews, as well as on the way in which they organized themselves socially and politically.

The havoc wrought by the Expulsion found succinct expression in the words of the great courtier-scholar Isaac Abravanel, who wrote: “In the end, all suffered: some by the sword, and some by captivity and some by disease, until but a few remained of the many. In the words of our fathers: ‘Behold we perish, we die, we are all perishing.’”<sup>1</sup> Contemporary Jewish accounts of the Expulsion and the harrowing years that followed are filled with similar

biblical allusions that recall the suffering of the Israelites, as well as affirmations of trust in God and exhortations for messianic deliverance.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding such heartfelt expressions of religious dedication, the Expulsion also created a very real set of problems that required the exiles to make a series of difficult social and political choices.

The first two decades after 1492 must be seen in terms of a refugee crisis. The perils Jewish exiles encountered were manifold, beginning with the problem of safe passage as they sought new areas of settlement. Even at the best of times, sea travel brought with it a measure of risk. Piracy remained a constant menace throughout the Mediterranean during the late medieval and early modern period, in addition to the problem of unscrupulous captains and crews. Jewish travelers aboard ships often came together to take up collections for bribes to ensure their safe passage.<sup>3</sup> This time-honored technique proved insufficient, however, for many refugees whose obvious vulnerability was too tempting for their shipmates. Traveling with all of their possessions and without the ability to seek redress against would-be offenders, the Spanish Jews were dependent upon the goodwill and pity of ships' captains.

The situation improved little once the refugees reached their intended destination. Their numbers were such that they were continually plagued by shortages of food, water, and proper shelter, a situation that aided the spread of disease. A leading figure among the exiles and one of the Expulsion's most famous chroniclers, Solomon ibn Verga, wrote that the Jewish refugees in North Africa were reduced to eating grass. Another exile who arrived in North Africa, Judah ibn Hayyat, mentions sleeping at night burrowed deep into garbage heaps in order to stay warm.<sup>4</sup> Even if we accept a measure of hyperbole in such statements, they nonetheless serve to focus our attention on the real forces at play during the onset of the Sephardic Diaspora. The most pressing concern for the waves of Jewish refugees was not religious antagonism or identity, but rather the physical condition in which they were forced to live. In a premodern world in which provisions were typically scarce, the task of feeding a large refugee population in the desert must have been staggering.

### Leaving Spain: The Expulsion as Process

The autobiographical account of the Tudelan scholar Shem Tov ibn Jamil offers a window onto the world of the Iberian refugees and the sorts of obstacles they encountered on their way out of Iberia.<sup>5</sup> Ibn Jamil was among the last professing Jews to leave Iberia as part of the expulsion from Navarre in 1498. The small Pyrenean kingdom had remained independent of Spain and provided safe haven for hundreds of Jewish refugees in 1492. Eventually, however, the

Navarrese crown succumbed to Spanish pressure and exiled the last legally constituted Jewry in the peninsula.<sup>6</sup> As they set out from the land-locked kingdom, Ibn Jamil and his fellow refugees found themselves in the difficult situation of having to pass through Spain long after the window for Jewish presence in that kingdom had been closed. Intent on reaching North Africa, he made it as far as the southern city of Valencia before being apprehended by Spanish officials and imprisoned. In his chronicle of the Expulsion, the elderly scholar recounted how he bribed a young Muslim to help him escape:

When the sun set and the Sabbath ended, I took a Muslim lad and paid him to take me out of that evil place. The lad brought me to a village near the city of Valencia. In the middle of the night I found a certain Muslim and paid him to bring me, in the darkness of the night, close to Castelnou.<sup>7</sup>

Forced to crisscross southeastern Spain, Ibn Jamil finally arrived in the port city of Almeria, where he hoped to escape to Oran. In Almeria, however, he was discovered as a Jew and imprisoned once more. Just then, a prominent Muslim came to his aid, testifying that Ibn Jamil and his traveling companions were Muslims and old friends of his. The Jews “proved” their Islamic identity by reciting a common Muslim prayer—the *shahada*. The party of Jews together with their Muslim companions escaped to Granada and, after a stay of several months, proceeded to Vélez-Málaga, still in search of transport to North Africa. There, in Vélez, Ibn Jamil’s identity was revealed and the entire group was imprisoned yet again.

Incredibly, despite the many hardships that Jews like Ibn Jamil were forced to endure in their efforts to leave Spain, their situation was not completely anarchic. Indeed, the various levels and facets of the Spanish judicial system continued to function amid the prevailing commotion of the day. Ibn Jamil and his party were not despoiled of all their possessions let alone killed outright, despite being easy targets for bandits. He relates that the conditions of their jails were deplorable, but that they were not left there to rot. Indeed, after having been moved from one locale to another by the Christian authorities, Ibn Jamil was eventually returned to Granada, the site of his last capture. There, he was kept in prison but was nonetheless able to reclaim his possessions, which, incredibly enough, were still extant and recoverable. Eventually, after seizing two of his sons in order to force his conversion, his captors relented and set him free. He was remanded to the custody of a Christian named Juan de Salas, one of several “righteous Gentiles” he mentions. His new master allowed him to cross over to the Moroccan city of Safi, where he was promptly redeemed by the local Jewish community.<sup>8</sup>

His two sons were not as lucky. They had ended up serving Christians who, though described as similarly benevolent, did not readily allow them to proceed to North Africa.<sup>9</sup> Eventually, the two brothers were reunited in the service of the same master and established contact with their father in North Africa via a merchant who acted as an intermediary between Ibn Jamil and the Christian lord. Over the course of prolonged correspondence, Ibn Jamil and the Christian lord agreed upon a set ransom to be paid in order to bring the sons to North Africa. In need of money, Ibn Jamil turned to the leaders of the Jewish settlement in Fez, a community that he describes as “fortunate” despite their many troubles during this period. Fortunate or not, they were unable to raise the necessary funds and suggested that he appeal to the Jews of Tlemçen. Having no other choice, the elderly scholar set out for Tlemçen and began preaching and teaching in order to raise the money to buy his sons’ freedom.<sup>10</sup> Ibn Jamil’s account of his harrowing passage from Navarre to North Africa ends there, among his fellow refugees, but very much alone. “I do not have a son or a brother,” he laments, “neither a grandchild nor a great-grandchild, nor any other close relation in this land. Nor is there anyone in this land who knows me and will testify about me.”

Ibn Jamil’s closing words stand as a poignant epitaph for many of his generation. Yet his winding path out of Iberia also highlights just how protracted and disorderly the Expulsion actually was. Though it is one of the great turning points in both Jewish and Spanish history, it is perhaps best to think of the Expulsion of 1492 as more of a slow and agonizing process of geographic and cultural migration than a decisive moment. The uncertainties of life in exile, and the short time that the Jews had to prepare for it, led many to choose to stay in Spain and accept Christianity. The voluntary conversions that took place just prior to the August deadline given in the Edict of Expulsion recalled the difficult calculations made by the generation of Jews following the forced baptisms of 1391. As with this earlier calamity, many Jews who were confronted by the choice between allegiance to their religious community and personal fiscal stability evaded the issue for as long as they could. Many contemporary Jewish authors presented the decision between conversion and exile as a test of faith. A short chronicle penned by a member of the rich and powerful de la Cavalleria clan and written shortly after the Expulsion gives some indication that the bitterness felt by Jews at the beginning of the fifteenth century had by no means diminished by 1492:

I will not mention their names on my lips. However, I will mention a wise man from Aragon who is a relative of mine, whose name is Messr. Alfonso, son of Messr. Pedro, the apostate, who converted along with his father, Don

Fernando, and his entire household, in the days of the priest Fra Vicente, the hater of Israel. These converts, the sons of the lion known as *Cavalleria*, destroyed and hurled down their own souls to the ground first, and afterwards those of their families so that there were only two brothers who remained [Jewish], Don Vidal my father and Don Salomon his brother, may their memory be for a blessing. They alone cleaved to their King, the Lord.<sup>11</sup>

Those who willingly accepted baptism during the chaotic summer of 1492 or shortly thereafter were portrayed by their former neighbors as weak-willed at best, and materialistic opportunists at worst. In the words of one exile: "Many remained in Spain who had not the strength to emigrate and whose hearts were not filled with God. Thus, many of them were lured away from their faith."<sup>12</sup> Rather than see it as a forced act of persecution, many Jews saw the converts' choice as voluntary and condemned them as unfaithful and adulterous. Writing on the conversions of the Castilian notables Abraham Seneor and Meir Melamed, one chronicler noted with bitterness: "They were not forced by might or by force or a strong arm. They changed their faith and left their community for a people without understanding [Hosea 4:14]."<sup>13</sup>

Such harsh judgments arose out of quite understandable feelings of bitterness. Unfortunately, they also tend to eclipse the very real practical dilemmas confronting Spanish Jewry at the time. In any refugee crisis, the potential victims will go to extraordinary lengths in order to avoid banishment or to generally protect themselves. The flurry of conversions to Christianity around the time of the Expulsion is thus a poor indicator of personal religious devotion.<sup>14</sup> Some Jews clearly sought to embrace Christianity as a means of preserving their property, while their wives and children—perhaps even at their behest—refused.<sup>15</sup> In some cases, Jews who opted to remain behind as converts helped to support their families living as exiles in Portugal. The New Christians would bring their Jewish relatives money and slowly liquidate their assets in Spain before joining them in exile and returning openly to Judaism.<sup>16</sup>

In the summer of 1492, a cohesive Sephardic community was still far in the future, but the shock of the royal decree did force Spain's traditionally independent Jewish communities to begin to unite. Traditionally quarrelsome *aljamas* closed ranks, and Jews from smaller settlements went into exile together with those from large neighboring communities. The *aljama* of Teruel went into exile en masse, and the Jews of Lérida departed together with "a great number of Jews" from the surrounding region.<sup>17</sup>

Extended families, neighbors, and Jews who were associated through other social networks provided one another with moral support, but perhaps



the key factor in the decision of many exiles to band together into groups was their dependence on those who were able to intercede on their behalves with foreign rulers. As noted earlier, relatively few refugees possessed either established ties to authorities outside Spain or sufficient funds to obtain safe conduct and settlement grants. Those who were sufficiently wealthy and well-connected quickly found themselves responsible for large numbers of their brethren.

The leadership role played by those Jews with ties to Christian rulers was therefore of paramount importance to the successful emigration and resettlement of the refugees. These men drew upon a long tradition of using bribes as a means of negotiating with both Christian and Muslim authorities. Jews migrating to North Africa after the riots of 1391 successfully purchased grants of protection.<sup>18</sup> Later, after the fall of Málaga in 1487, the Jews captured by the Christians were eventually released due to a collection taken up by the Jewish communities of Castile. In addition to buying the freedom of the captives, the monies collected by the Castilian courtiers Abraham Seneor and Meir Melamed secured for them royal writs of safe-conduct. In their formal declaration of freedom, Queen Isabella permitted the Málagaans to settle anywhere in her dominions, adding “and if some of the said Jews would like to go and cross the sea with their wives and children and household, that they should be allowed to go safely without any impediment.”<sup>19</sup>

The dependence upon leadership of wealthy Jews during the exodus from Spain is reflected in the registers of Jews leaving the recently conquered Kingdom of Granada, where some “households” were listed as comprising as many as fifty-three people.<sup>20</sup> Two former royal interpreters, Samuel and Juda, used their links to the royal court to obtain exemptions from paying the customs tax levied upon those leaving Spain. In the end, however, the former courtiers were still required to pay half the required amount because local officials suspected that they had taken on the goods of other families in their care.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, an anonymous account of the Expulsion credits the Jewish notable Don Vidal de la Cavalleria with preparing the way for the Jews seeking shelter in Portugal. “One hundred and twenty thousand of them went to Portugal, according to a compact which a prominent man, Don Vidal bar Benveniste de la Cavalleria, had made with the king of Portugal.” Later, the same account notes:

Many of the exiled Spaniards went to Muslim countries, to Fez, Tlemçen, and the Berber provinces, under the king of Tunis. Most of the Muslims did not allow them into their cities, and many of them died in the fields from hunger, thirst, and lack of everything. ... A Jew in the kingdom of Tlemçen, named Abraham, the viceroy who ruled the kingdom, had some

of them come to his kingdom, and he spent a large amount of money to help them. The Jews of North Africa were very charitable toward them.<sup>22</sup>

Notwithstanding this laudatory account, the task of interceding on behalf of the Spanish refugees was by no means a simple one. According to the chronicler Joseph Ha-Kohen, the Jews' failure to make the appropriate preparations that would allow for their settlement in North Africa became a major obstacle. "The Arabs reproached them and talked to them harshly because the Jews had come into their land without making a covenant with them beforehand."<sup>23</sup> Ha-Kohen's passing mention of the failure of Jewish leadership alludes to an important facet of Jewish relations with both Muslims and Christians in their new areas of settlement. For those who accepted the vagaries of exile in North Africa and Italy, successful resettlement often hinged on the intercession of well-connected Jewish courtiers and prominent merchants.

### The New Reality in Portugal

The exact number of Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 has been a subject of some debate, but the most reasonable estimates put the number at around 80,000.<sup>24</sup> Of that total, perhaps only 10,000 Jews came from the lands of the former Crown of Aragon. The majority of the Aragonese Jews set out for Italy and Navarre, though some, such as the Jews of the city of Teruel, headed to North Africa.<sup>25</sup> Demographically speaking, however, the majority of the Jewish exiles left from Castile, and their most popular destination was the neighboring kingdom of Portugal.

In 1492, Portugal was a rising power and Spain's rival for political and economic influence in the North Atlantic. Its king, João II (r. 1481–95), openly welcomed Spain's Jewish refugees, though not without demanding an entry fee. Those who made the long journey westward through the mountain passes of Extremadura found safe haven in a relatively wealthy kingdom that boasted a sizable Jewish community, and whose language and customs closely resembled those of their native Castile. None could have fathomed the fate that awaited them there.

The protected status of the refugees in Portugal remained stable, even during the ascension of João II's cousin and brother-in-law, Manuel I, in the autumn of 1495. Such moments of royal transition were always turbulent times for the Jews, who were considered vassals of the crown and thus directly dependant upon royal protection. When João II died without a direct male heir, potential for popular unrest was high. Rumors quickly began to circulate about plots to attack symbols of royal authority, including

the kingdom's Jewish quarters. Together with his sister, Queen Leonor, Manuel took action to protect his Jewish subjects, sending preemptive letters forbidding any violence against the Jews or their property.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, Jewish hopes for continued stability under the new king were shattered the following year. Their fate was sealed not by popular animosity or ecclesiastical pressure but by Dom Manuel's decision to marry the Infanta Isabella of Aragon, presumptive heiress to the Spanish throne. The Catholic Monarchs feared that union with Portugal would, among other things, allow for the return of the Jewish exiles to their Spanish homes, essentially invalidating the Edict of Expulsion. As a precondition to the marriage, Ferdinand and Isabella demanded that Manuel help avoid such an event and show his support for their policy by banishing all Jews from his realm. The young Portuguese king grudgingly acquiesced to their demands, and in December of 1496 he decreed that the Jews had eleven months to convert or leave. Most opted to leave, as they had in Spain, hoping to find shelter with those Jews who had already begun to settle in North Africa. Assessing this turn of events, Manuel balked at the idea that he was about to lose the revenue of the majority of his Jewish subjects, new and old. His solution was to seize the Jews at the port of Lisbon on their way out of the kingdom, and force them to accept baptism.<sup>27</sup>

In many ways, the wholesale conversion of the Jews in Portugal in 1497 was a more significant event than the Expulsion of 1492, particularly for those affected. As onerous as the Spanish decree had been, it nonetheless preserved the Jews' fundamental autonomy, as well as the possibility that, should there be a shift in the fortunes of the Spanish crown, they might return to their former homes in the near future. Manuel's unprecedented decision extinguished these last embers of hope.

The forced baptism of the Jews in 1497 altered the character of the Sephardic Diaspora at its outset. The Spanish mass-conversions of 1391 had resulted from intense missionary pressure and the widespread popular zeal it produced. By contrast, the universal conversion of Portuguese Jewry stemmed from a royal fiat. The corresponding disparity in popular attitude toward the converts was striking. The events of 1391 had been accompanied by a sense of ecstatic religious triumphalism throughout Spanish society that only began to dissipate in the mid-fifteenth century, as realization of the social and political consequences of New Christian competition began to set in. In Portugal, where both the Church and the laity had little involvement in the king's quixotic decision, popular disaffection with the converts was almost immediate. The Dominican friars who, in previous generations, had been at the forefront of the mission to convert the Jews, now led the drive to attack the recent converts as heretics.

Adding insult to injury, the rest of Portuguese society quickly identified these victims of royal abuse as agents of royal oppression. By 1506, barely ten years after the onset of the forced baptisms, Lisbon was rocked by an outbreak of anti-*Converso* violence that was as much an uprising against royal authority as it was an expression of religious fervor. The crown itself agreed not to inquire into the behavior of the New Christians for a while, in an effort to convince them to stay, but also went so far as to block their exit from the kingdom. The *Conversos* were officially forbidden to leave Portugal in 1499, an order that was not rescinded until March of 1507.<sup>28</sup>

By the second quarter of the sixteenth century, the initial chaos created by the decrees of 1492 and 1497 had given way to a new status quo. A new social reality had been established among the *Conversos* in Portugal, a community that was rapidly being dominated by those born after the great conversion. This second generation of Hispano-Jewish immigrants would engage in a protracted if ultimately losing battle to stop a new, national branch of the Inquisition from being established in Portugal. Some remained in Portugal and weathered the coming storm of inquisitorial scrutiny, but many in this generation chose to flee the kingdom, following Iberia's expanding trade routes into the Mediterranean, northern Europe, and a host of far-flung colonies. It was this latter group that was responsible for laying the foundation of a new Diaspora network of *Conversos* and former *Conversos* that overlapped with, but never fully conformed to, that of the other Sephardim.

As had been the case in Spain, the emigration of Jews out of Portugal was staggered over many years. Some Jews succeeded in leaving Portugal before the mass conversions of 1497, while others managed to escape as *Conversos* immediately thereafter. Those still able to afford passage out of the kingdom headed to the Muslim cities of North Africa, in pursuit of religious freedom and to join the balance of the Spanish refugees who had migrated to the region at the time of the Expulsion. The obstacles to this passage were considerable, however, and caused many to remain in Portugal. The rabbi and chronicler Judah ibn Hayyat was among a group of Jews who left Portugal in 1492 but could not find anyone to take them in. Finally, they were captured at sea by the Spanish and brought to Málaga, where they remained aboard ship in the port. Catholic priests came aboard daily in an effort to convert them, sometimes accompanied by Christian lay leaders. The local bishop commanded that the refugees be starved in order to force them to accept baptism. A substantial minority of the Jews acquiesced to these tactics, but most resisted. After five days, the bishop relented and allowed the remaining Jews to receive food, but he kept them prisoners in the port of Málaga for two more months before letting them sail for Morocco.<sup>29</sup> Those stalwart Jews that eventually reached North Africa

had succeeded in thwarting royal and ecclesiastical efforts at conversion. Sadly, their time of troubles was only just beginning.

## North Africa

In retrospect, it is tempting to contrast the mass conversion of the Jews in Portugal with the relatively open welcome they received in the Ottoman Empire, and from thence to draw conclusions about the relative treatment of religious minorities in the early modern Christian and Muslim worlds. However, such generalizations are, at best, premature with regard to the sixteenth century. In the first decade following the Spanish Expulsion, the Ottoman lands of the eastern Mediterranean remained distant and inaccessible for the vast majority of the refugees. Before they were to reach the sheltering protection of the Sublime Porte, many were forced to suffer years of privation in the region of northwestern Africa known as the Maghreb.

The reception of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews in North Africa was conditioned by two general factors. The first was the relationship between local Muslim authorities and local Jews, including many who were of European provenance, which had developed over the course of the fifteenth century. The second was the prevailing atmosphere of political instability and economic hardship that gripped the region for much of the sixteenth century.

During the fifteenth century, the general condition of North African Jewry was that of a relatively prosperous and protected minority. A Genoese merchant who visited the Maghrebi oasis of Tamantit in 1447 noted: "There are many Jews who lead a good life here, for they are under the protection of the several rulers, each of who defends his own clients. Thus they enjoy a very secure social standing. Trade is in their hands and many of them are to be trusted with the greatest confidence."<sup>30</sup> The good life mentioned here depended upon political protection and the regular flow of trade. Unfortunately, the political situation in the Maghreb was extremely volatile throughout this period. Instability meant that Jewish status and protection were precarious, and the Jews of the region were often victims of wholesale violence. In 1438, an attack against the Jews of Fez led to the establishment of a new, more protected Jewish quarter called the *mellah*, which became the prototype for Jewish settlements in North Africa. Another attack on the Jews of Fez took place in 1465 when a local preacher incited a popular uprising against the sultan, 'Abdel-Haq ben Abu Sa'id, and his Jewish vizier. Both were killed, and the collapse of the sultan's protection led to the massacre of the city's Jewish population. Though it appears that most were killed, some Jews were converted and remained an unassimilated subculture within Muslim society.<sup>31</sup> During the

1480s, the Muslim jurist Muhammed al-Maghili fulminated against the Jews of the oasis of Tu'at, claiming that they and other Jews in the region had illegally constructed synagogues and avoided their regular payments of the poll tax (*jizya*).<sup>32</sup> These allegations meant that the Jews had violated the general pact by which religious minorities, the *ahl-al-Dhimma*, were allowed to live, and were thus no longer eligible for protection.<sup>33</sup> Al-Maghili's call for a Muslim uprising against the Jews ultimately failed, but the backlash against him was less a condemnation of his anti-Jewish rhetoric than a challenge to other Muslim authorities. Indeed, while his fellow jurists eventually expelled him, many nonetheless upheld his attack on local synagogues.

These sorts of religious tensions, while a constant feature of Mediterranean society, nonetheless remained highly contextualized and continued to allow for important relationships to develop between Jews and their Christian and Muslim neighbors. These relationships proved essential to Jewish survival during periods in which popular hostilities flared. The most profitable way in which to assess the nature of anti-Jewish violence in North Africa during the late medieval and early modern periods is not to measure it in terms of religious ideology, but to see it as a product of general social tensions that waxed and waned in relation to the region's political stability.

This is the context in which the reception of Spanish Jews in North Africa is to be viewed. The attacks on the Spanish and Portuguese exiles at the turn of the century appear to have been primarily the result of the general instability of the period and the added vulnerability of the refugees, not anti-Jewish fervor. Joseph Ha-Kohen reports that "the Muslims killed some of [the Jews] in order to rob them of their gold, some of which they swallowed in order to hide it."<sup>34</sup> Jews were caught up in the turmoil of local warfare, heavily taxed by every Muslim faction, and suffered along with the Muslims from famine and disease. Food shortages, economic competition, and a general wariness of foreigners helped to fuel popular animosity toward the Hispano-Muslim refugees.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the most pointed illustration of the secular motivation for the tensions between Jews and Muslims in North Africa is the equally harsh reception that Iberian Muslims encountered as they too sought to settle in the region. During the Moroccan famine of 1521–22, some Muslims sold themselves into slavery to Christians rather than starve to death.<sup>36</sup>

Iberian Jews who reached the cities of North Africa encountered several different Jewish communities that had learned to coexist without ever fully integrating.<sup>37</sup> There were those who had inhabited the region for centuries, whose dress, customs, and use of Arabic must have made them, at first glance, indistinguishable from their Muslim neighbors. These Jews appear in the literature of the day under a variety of different terms, including

Maghrebi, in association with their region of northwest Africa, Mustarab (lit. "Arab-like"), a term that refers to their general integration into Arabic culture, and Toshavim, a Hebrew term meaning "settled" or "native" Jews, and one that contrasted them with the other principle Jewish group in the area, the Megorashim, or expelled. This last term, which would later be applied to the exiles of 1492, was already in use to describe those Jews who descended from earlier waves of European refugees stemming from Iberia, Mallorca, and France who had settled in North Africa following the riots of 1391 and the French expulsion of 1394. A century after their arrival in the region, these Jews of European provenance remained separate from their Mustarab counterparts, maintaining their own synagogues and communal leaders as well as their own language, dress, and other customs. For those Jewish merchants and diplomats who had preserved strong ties with North Africa and, in particular, with the Jews of Iberian heritage who had found safe haven there, these communities formed an important and familiar part of their social, economic, and intellectual networks. To the majority of the Iberian refugees however, this earlier group of Megorashim might well have appeared as a community frozen in time, poised for a return to their European cities of origin that was, unbeknownst to them, still centuries off.

In some cities, the refugees of 1492 joined together with those of earlier exiles, swelling the ranks of their communities. Elsewhere, the shared cultural heritage of the European Jews was not enough to overcome their differences in culture, situation, and leadership, and the newcomers established communities distinct from those already in existence.<sup>38</sup> This tendency toward atomization continued to be a hallmark of Jewish settlement and communal organization throughout the Mediterranean.

The most sought-after areas of Jewish settlement were the cities of the Mediterranean coast and the royal capital of Fez, which though farther inland was both a major trading center and one of the few places in which the local Jews enjoyed a measure of security and protection. Hispano-Jewish merchants had longstanding ties to the Algerian city of Tlemçen and its principal port, Oran. After 1492, the two cities became leading centers for the reception of Hispano-Jewish refugees.<sup>39</sup> When the cities became unable to accommodate any more refugees, many fanned out into the Dades valley, and to a number of rural districts that lay on the southern edge of the Atlas Mountains. One wealthy Jewish family from Castile, the Peres, bought a large parcel of rural land, developed their own settlement, and married only among their own clan. Elsewhere, the mountain town of Ait Daoud became filled with Jewish artisans.<sup>40</sup>

In their reception of Spanish and Portuguese Jews, the attitude of North African Muslims was not directed by religious ideology, tolerant or otherwise.



The arrival of waves of Jewish refugees at the end of the fifteenth century did nothing to alter the classic Muslim perspective on the Jews as *dhimmis*—a legal category that afforded them protection in exchange for extra taxes and the general acceptance of lower social status.<sup>41</sup> The fate of Maghrebi Jews, natives and newcomers alike, waxed and waned with the political fortunes of the region as a whole. The Wattasid sultan, Mulay Muhammed al-Shaykh (r. 1472–1505), allowed many of those who had converted during the riots of 1465 to revert to Judaism.<sup>42</sup> The considerable protection of the Wattasid dynasty was a key element in the establishment of a large colony of Hispano-Jewish settlers at Fez, but its force was geographically limited and was not enough to shelter the majority of Jewish refugees. Eyewitness accounts list famine and disease among the various plagues that drove many deeper into the desert and convinced others to return to Spain.<sup>43</sup>

## Italy

After Portugal and North Africa, the trading centers of Renaissance Italy were the third major destination of the Spanish refugees. The Italian port cities of Naples and Genoa were on the natural maritime routes leading out of Spain for the Jews of the Crown of Aragon. Unfortunately, the potential for settlement in Italy was in many ways worse than that in North Africa.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps the most famous account of the harsh reception received by the Spanish exiles in Italy is that of the Jews of Rome as recorded by Solomon ibn Verga in his sixteenth-century chronicle.<sup>45</sup> Ibn Verga wrote that Roman Jews attempted to bar the entry of a group of Spanish refugees coming from Genoa, an action so devoid of mercy that it supposedly shocked even the pope. While elements of this story may be apocryphal, it appears to reflect popular fears regarding the Jewish exiles.<sup>46</sup> The Italian chronicler Stefano Infessura wrote that the Spanish refugees were kept outside of the walls of Rome because they were said to be infested with the plague.<sup>47</sup> Whether springing from the native Jews' fears regarding their ability to accommodate the refugees, or from a more general concern that the exiles were carriers of disease, the circulation of such stories fueled anxieties among the Iberian Jews as they moved from place to place.

Writing in Italy during the sixteenth century, the Arab chronicler Leo Africanus claimed that the Jewish exiles introduced syphilis to North Africa via interreligious sex between Jewish women and Muslim men. He also identified leprosy as a particularly "Jewish" disease that the Sephardim brought to Naples.<sup>48</sup> Notwithstanding the anti-Semitic subtext of such allegations, in most sixteenth-century accounts the possibility of contagion seems to have



been taken literally, and not as a metaphor for some abstract notion of communal or spiritual pollution. Fear and suspicion gripped the people with regard to the source of the plague, and many associated the disease with the Jews due to their poverty.<sup>49</sup>

In an example of cruel irony, the popular association of the Jews with money made the impoverished refugees targets for attack. Shortly after the bedraggled Spanish and southern Italian Jews began to arrive in Rome, the forces of Charles VIII of France attacked the city. The refugees and native Jews alike fell victim to the unchecked aggression of the soldiers, who, though ostensibly preparing for a crusade against the Turks, seemed more concerned with plunder than with the defense of Christendom. Contemporary accounts note that, after quarreling with the Jews of Rome, the French soldiers killed them and destroyed their synagogue, but not before seizing the Jews' possessions.<sup>50</sup> Charles then moved south from Rome, routing the Neapolitan forces and entering Naples on February 22, 1494. There, his soldiers were once again led to despoil the local Jewish population by the promise of easy plunder. The Venetian chronicler Marino Sanuto notes that the French were particularly interested in seeking out the Spanish Jews due to their famed wealth.<sup>51</sup>

Iberian Jews who made it to Italy found the atmosphere there to be almost as inhospitable as that in North Africa, and far worse than what they were used to in Spain. On August 10, 1492, some eight days after all Jews had to leave Spain, a large convoy of Jewish refugees arrived in Naples.<sup>52</sup> But the city could offer no permanent sanctuary. Both Naples and the Sicilian city of Palermo, homes of traditionally large and vibrant Jewish communities, were under the control of the Spanish crown and had become swept up in the same movement of expulsion. Fearing that the wave of Iberian Jews would only exacerbate an already tense situation, the native Jews in cities such as Rome, Genoa, and Naples were less than welcoming. This initial encounter between these two cross-sections of Mediterranean Jewry did much to reinforce the importance of the loose regional identities associated with each. Those Iberian refugees who resisted the temptation to accept baptism and return to their homeland began to file into Rome—the only large urban haven left open to Jews on the peninsula's western coast.<sup>53</sup>

Over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the economic prospects of Italian Jewry had been increasingly narrowed toward small-scale banking and trades such as jewelry making. This period also witnessed the diffusion of Jews throughout Italy's smaller towns and villages, as the same competition from Christian bankers and artisan guilds that restricted Jewish professional options also drove many out of the larger cities. In the north, Jewish refugees streamed in from France and Germany and were

joined by those being pushed out of the larger Jewish centers in the south. By 1492, scores of small Jewish settlements had been established throughout the northern part of the peninsula.<sup>54</sup> The primary occupation of most of these Jews, and the motive for allowing them to settle in a given area, was the practice of lending money. The clients of these Jews were almost uniformly poor villagers seeking small, short-term loans, and most Jews themselves lived close to poverty. This situation led Jewish lenders to guard their territories against competition, and in many cases Jews sought official recognition from Christian authorities for exclusive rights to operate within their locale.

Jews in fifteenth-century Italy continued to enjoy close relations with their Christian neighbors. However, such easy coexistence was always subject to the policies of Christian lords and urban councils, and was sometimes menaced by the latent violence of the masses. In Italy, as in Spain, the fifteenth century was characterized by repeated popular and religious attacks on the Jews and their rights, followed by renewed guarantees of security issued by those regional states that still found the Jews worth protecting. Nonetheless, Italian lords were unable to hold back the tide of violence unleashed by the general political disorder of the period. The king of Naples attempted to protect the Jewish community when the French laid siege to city in 1494, but could not prevent the local populace from rising up against them. The ensuing massacre had the increasingly familiar result of Jews choosing to convert in order to save their lives.<sup>55</sup>

As with the Expulsion from Spain itself, the exclusion of the Jews from southern Italy was a long and disorganized process. In 1504, the Catholic Monarchs were still trying to enforce the Edict of Expulsion in their Italian territories. Writing to their representatives in the Kingdom of Naples, they repeated that they wanted the Jews out of all their lands. But the crown had not realized that most of these Jews had chosen to convert, and expelling Christians, however lightly they took their new religion, was a more complicated matter.<sup>56</sup>

### The Ottoman Empire

Finally, some of the Jews who left Spain in 1492 did make it as far as the Ottoman Empire. There, they joined the small groups of Iberian settlers who had arrived in the eastern Mediterranean during the previous fifty years and began to lay the groundwork for what would soon become the largest, wealthiest, and most diverse Sephardic settlements in the world.

In contrast to the virtual anarchy produced by decades of continuous siege warfare that the exiles encountered in the cities of Italy and North Africa, a very different situation awaited them in Ottoman lands.<sup>57</sup> Turkish forces were

on the march during this period, conquering the Byzantine capital of Constantinople in 1453 and dominating the whole of the Near East by 1520. In contrast to their rivals in the central and western Mediterranean, the Ottomans were able to occupy new territories and integrate them into the political system of the empire with relative ease. In the Maghreb and the Italian Peninsula, wars were costly affairs that produced few decisive victories and accomplished little in the way of political stability. Venice emerged from the calamitous events of the early sixteenth century as perhaps the most powerful of the Italian polities in large part because its leaders learned quickly not to upset the fragile relationship with the Ottomans. While the Venetians generally fared poorly against the Ottomans in the series of wars that ended in 1503, their policy of rapprochement was the product of pragmatism, not dread. The Venetians were guided primarily by respect for the financial gains to be had in peace rather than out of fear of Ottoman military might.

The trend toward pragmatism and profit greatly benefited the Jewish exiles. The mercantilist posture that would, by mid-century, lead many contemporary Italian barons to issue extensive privileges to the Jews was first embraced by their Ottoman rivals, who saw the Jews as agents of economic development.<sup>58</sup> Those among the exile of 1492 who were able to reach cities of the Ottoman Empire quickly recognized the potential benefits it provided. The dark cloud surrounding this silver lining was the direct connection between Ottoman benevolence and Jewish utility. Simply put, it did not bode well for the Jews to outlive their usefulness to the empire. Moreover, the same potential economic contributions that led the Sublime Porte to treat the Jews favorably simultaneously caused a measure of resentment from local Muslims, many of whom bristled at any sign of imperial favor shown toward either Jews or Christians.<sup>59</sup> Nor was such favor always characteristic of Turkish attitudes toward their *dhimmi* subjects. An indication of the potentially harsh and quixotic nature of Ottoman treatment of the Jews can be seen in the writings of Rabbi Elijah Capsali, a native of Crete whose chronicles are usually marked by considerable respect for the Turkish authorities. Capsali notes that one of the acts of imperial benevolence shown to the Sephardic newcomers by Sultan Selim I (r. 1512–20) was to undo the decidedly unwelcoming forced conversion of Jews that had taken place under Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512).<sup>60</sup>

The reign of Selim I did, indeed, usher in an era of more accommodating policies with regard to the empire's Jews. This period also coincided with a variety of other factors, including the establishment of the Portuguese Inquisition, which led to greater Jewish immigration to Ottoman lands. In the first decade or so following the Expulsion, however, Jewish settlement in the eastern Mediterranean remained relatively modest. These Jewish exiles from

Spain and its Italian territories that did arrive at this time benefited from the economic growth and general prosperity of the Ottoman Empire, a key factor and important stimulus to Jewish settlement for decades.

For the Jewish refugees, the principal attraction of the Ottoman Empire was first and foremost its potential as a safe haven for settlement. While rabbis argued for the benefits of religious freedom, other Jews emphasized more prosaic concerns. A letter written by Jewish settlers in Salonica to their relatives in Provence is illustrative in this regard. It states: "Those poverty-stricken people with no one to rely on here find suitable refuge; they neither hunger nor thirst, they are not smitten by the hardships of enslavement and exile, for God in His mercy has had us find favor with all the Gentiles amongst whom we dwell."<sup>61</sup> This theme of protection was echoed by the Salonican rabbi Samuel de Medina, who noted:

Most of those who arrived from Europe did so with the intention of seeking shelter under the protection of our master, the merciful king, since he and his forefathers acted most favorably towards us. . . . Our eyes beheld the frequent troubles becoming these people whose souls, bodies and belongings, are much safer in the realm of the merciful kings, may their majesty be great and the kingdom exalted.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to protection, bustling mercantile centers such as Istanbul and Salonica beckoned to Sephardic settlers in search of economic opportunity. Despite the continued Jewish reverence for Jerusalem and its environs, the region was not a major destination for those refugees who were able to reach the eastern Mediterranean at this time.<sup>63</sup>

By 1510, the Spanish exiles had already emerged as a recognizable group in Ottoman Salonica, the Balkan city that was later considered a second Jerusalem due to the size of its Jewish population.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, while descendants of the Iberian Jews eventually came to settle in nearly every major mercantile center of the empire, nowhere else was their presence as dominant as in Salonica. Ottoman tax registers from this period offer a sense of the rapid and massive impact of Jewish immigration. No Jews appear in Salonica's register for the year 1478, but by 1519 there were some 3,143 Jewish households—over half of the city's population.<sup>65</sup> Istanbul boasted a large Sephardic settlement, but the capital was also home to the empire's largest Romanian population, the result of forced resettlement of most of the native Jews in the 1450s. The size and diversity of both the general population and the Jews of the Ottoman capital muted the cultural impact of the Iberian newcomers. It was left to Salonica to become the queen city of the Sephardic exile.

The Jews who settled in Salonica benefited from a booming trade in textiles for which the Ottoman state was their biggest customer. Beginning in 1537, however, the wealth and privileged status enjoyed by the Jews of this city declined and their golden goose became a noose. The Jews could sell only to the state, but the latter could buy at will from other producers, which by the late 1530s included the English and the Italians. In 1566, the regular tax burden was exacerbated by an imperial demand for tribute in the form of 7,800 head of sheep. As the Jewish chronicler Moses Almosnino (d. 1580) describes it:

[The Ottomans] did not give us rest and imposed on us innumerable taxes and levies, and what was particularly heavy on us was the issue of the head of sheep, which was without precedent among the Jews and was intolerable. The Jews of Salonica were working for the service of the king day and night, making cloth for his slave [troops], the janissaries. And despite that, we were ordered to send seventy-eight hundred head of sheep to Constantinople every year.<sup>66</sup>

In response to these demands, Almosnino took part in a delegation that spent over a year in the Turkish capital, lobbying for a reduced financial burden.

The Jews who left Spain in 1492 and the Conversos who escaped Portugal after 1497 made a clear declaration of their preference to live as Jews rather than as Christians. For centuries, their decision has stood as a moving testament to religious devotion and cultural pride. Yet religious freedom meant little without attendant opportunities for safety and economic subsistence, and the exiles were quickly confronted with the bleak realities of refugee life. The benefit of North Africa's proximity to Iberia was greatly diminished by political upheaval in that region, as well as by the scarcity of food, shelter, and occupations brought on by the sheer size of the refugee population. Those who set out for the city-states of Italy found a similar atmosphere of chaos and even greater formal restrictions on Jewish settlement and trade. Of all the potential areas of settlement, the trading centers of the Ottoman Empire offered the best haven for the waves of migrant Jews. However, in the first decades after 1492, these cities remained out of reach for most.

## Return

The difficulties of life in exile without sufficient means of support were such that, almost immediately, the refugees entered into negotiation with

the crown for their return. Like the decision to accept exile, the decision to return to Spain was not taken lightly. Return meant conversion, but the matter was much more complicated than that. Travel of this sort, across long distances with families and goods in search of permanent settlement, required official permission and grants of safe conduct.<sup>67</sup>

Those Jews who converted on the eve of the Expulsion were later joined by others who initially set out to leave Spain but soon changed their mind. Having reached the designated border crossings at Zamora, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Badajoz, many Castilian Jews were unable to take the final step into exile and converted rather than crossing into Portugal.

The nature of some of these last-minute conversions underscores the degree to which family, clan, and social networks often overshadowed religious affiliation and identity in Jewish society, especially in times of crisis. The exiles produced by the Expulsion comprised a collection of groups ranging from small family units up to whole communities, as many Jews left their homes together with their extended families, their neighbors, and their servants and other dependents. In such cases, the *padres familias* and other leaders were responsible for finding shelter for their entire flock. The Jews of the Castilian town of Maqueda stayed together in both Portugal and Fez, and many even seem to have returned to Spain together.<sup>68</sup> Born of necessity, this kind of newfound group cohesiveness not only determined how and where Jews traveled, but also whether or not they accepted baptism. A change of heart at the Portuguese border by one or two Jews who had been made de facto heads of their flock could lead a large group of Jews to convert and return home en masse. Samuel Abulafia, a former tax farmer, converted together with his family and returned to his native Toledo, and Francisco de Águila led a group of fifty-three Conversos back from Ciudad Rodrigo to his native Atienza.<sup>69</sup> As was the case with Abulafia, many of those who went back to Spain had something to gain from returning.<sup>70</sup>

The difficult decision to abandon Judaism was made easier by the Spanish crown, which almost immediately began lobbying for the return of the exiles. The Catholic Monarchs had always maintained that conversion to Christianity was a means to avoid expulsion, and in several instances they made a concerted effort to convince whole *aljamas* of Jews to convert and stay.<sup>71</sup> As early as November of 1492 they began to issue formal decrees that granted their former subjects the right to return to Spain, as long as they accepted baptism.<sup>72</sup>

The crown treated the returnees much as they had when they were Jews: as long as they obeyed existing law, the recent converts had the right to protection from all manner of injustice and abuse. Unfortunately, enforcing

such protection remained extremely problematic.<sup>73</sup> The line between Jew and “New Christian” in Spain had been sufficiently blurred over the two previous generations, so that following the Expulsion documentation of baptism did not always guarantee full rights of citizenship from a host of dubious officials. Many also used suspicion of religious identity as a convenient excuse to take advantage of the returnees. Any Jew who could not show proper receipts for having paid the entry fee was liable to have his goods confiscated. The potential for abuse of power in this regard was greatly exacerbated by the law that allowed one-third of the confiscated property to go to whomever denounced converted Jews, a provision that only encouraged people to rob returning converts of their documents and then denounce them.<sup>74</sup>

Bureaucratic malfeasance echoed a general attitude of doubt and animosity among the Spaniards with regard to the returnees. If Conversos’ fidelity to their new faith had been met with skepticism before 1492, those who accepted exile as Jews only to return within months as newly baptized Christians left little doubt that they had converted out of privation and not faith. At nearly all levels of society, these questions of sincerity overshadowed any theological argument about the spiritual potency of baptism. Whether or not those among this most recent wave of converts were, strictly speaking, Christians, was of no interest for most peasants, townsmen, and nobles. Royal and ecclesiastical officials may have actively encouraged the return and conversion of the Spanish Jews, but the general populace did not always share their objectives, and attacks on returnees were widespread.<sup>75</sup> Ongoing negotiations for permission to return proved fruitful, but even the combination of baptism and royal protection were not enough to deflect the popular hatred and rejection that awaited the returnees in nearly all of their former cities. This popular disaffection toward the converts who sought reentry to Spain in the months and years immediately after the Expulsion was only reinforced by privileges granted to them by the crown. Not only were the “Jews” returning, they were also demanding return of their property and repayment of their loans.

The recent converts, many of whom seemed to have little true affinity for their adopted faith, nonetheless demonstrated faith in the judicial system of the kingdom that had recently expelled them, and that continued to pursue and punish religious transgressors. Thus, social, political, and above all financial concerns regularly overshadowed religious ideals and the categories (i.e., “New” Christians) that they produced. Indeed, the desire to recuperate one’s estate appears to have been one of the primary motivations for return.<sup>76</sup> Such was the case of a wealthy widow who entered exile in 1492 and later decided to convert and return to her native Castile. Upon her arrival, she

promptly set about suing several people for the return of money and property she felt was owed to her, including money that had been stolen from her at the time of the Expulsion.<sup>77</sup>

A similar case was that of Diego Garcia, representative for a party of Jewish refugees seeking to settle in the North African port of Oran. While Garcia was ashore negotiating with the local authorities, the ship's Spanish captain took the opportunity to appropriate his goods. Garcia was unsuccessful in obtaining settlement privileges for his flock, and was thus faced with the kind of dilemma that was rapidly becoming a hallmark of the Sephardic Diaspora. Without the guarantee of protection from a local lord, the refugees remained easy prey for those who could rob, rape, enslave, or kill them without fear of retribution. After abandoning hope of settling in North Africa, Garcia led his group back to Spain, where they accepted Christianity.<sup>78</sup> We cannot know how difficult this decision was for Garcia and the many Jews like him who went to great lengths to preserve their Jewish identity and the identity of those whom they had come to lead. However, it is not hard to imagine that the need to obtain some form of royal or seigneurial protection played a crucial role in their final decision to convert. Once Christian, the legal status of the dispossessed changed immediately. In Garcia's case, he wasted little time in seeking out the captain who had robbed him at Oran and sued him for return of his stolen property. As in the case of the widow mentioned above, the suit took time; defendants stalled or refused to appear in court. But Garcia remained undeterred. If he and others like him were going to have to abandon their religion in order to receive the rights and protection that would enable them to survive, they were also determined to ensure that they received those rights in full.

The number of returnees from Italy and North Africa appears to have been small compared to those who drifted back across the border from Portugal, but the decision over whether to return no doubt weighed heavily on the minds of the refugees for years.<sup>79</sup> Many Spanish Jews made it as far as Naples, only to accept conversion during the terror unleashed by the French invasion. While it has been suggested that these converts remained in Italy, there is evidence that some made the arduous journey back to Spain.<sup>80</sup> Those Jews who converted after reaching Italy and then decided to return to Spain often did so as a last resort, when lack of work and familial demands forced them to seek a livelihood in Christian society.<sup>81</sup> The appearance in the eastern provinces of Spain of recent converts from Italy also coincided with the death of King Ferrante I of Naples in 1494. Ferrante had demonstrated a very pragmatic, even liberal attitude with regard to the Jews, but the political situation in Naples deteriorated rapidly after his death, and the city was soon



occupied by Charles VIII of France, who was far less interested in sheltering Jewish refugees. The impetus for conversion and return to the lands of the Crown of Aragon was thus analogous to that which brought the much larger number of exiles back to Castile from Portugal and North Africa. In all these regions, economic hardship and political instability challenged and often overcame religious devotion.

The returning neophytes were well aware that the Inquisition and many of their once and future Christian neighbors were suspicious of their motives for wanting to convert and return to Spain. When asked to describe their conversions in cities such as Genoa and Naples, they invariably recounted that these were solemn affairs in which they received baptism with "great devotion."<sup>82</sup> Despite such rhetorical flourishes, it seems that in most cases the final decision of those Jewish refugees who voluntarily received baptism continued to be prompted by material concerns.

Just as King Ferrante I of Naples had helped to establish a thorough bureaucratic apparatus to receive and process the waves of Jewish refugees after 1492, so too did Ferdinand II of Aragon, King of Spain, oversee a similarly detailed administration dedicated to resettling those Jews who sought to return to their homeland. The inevitable corruption and abuses of power of government officials in both Naples and Spain should not obscure the fact that the intent of both sovereigns was to create an orderly process for the resettlement of the Jews and former Jews, respectively. To return to Spain, a convert had to go before the *vicario* (royal magistrate) of the city in which he or she sought to settle and present the certificate of baptism. A notary then validated the credentials and created a new record of the convert's Christian identity.<sup>83</sup>

Like their Castilian counterparts, the returnees to Catalonia and Aragon took full advantage of the royal and local judicial system in order to recover former property. In 1494, the Converso Joan Angelo, formerly Jehuda Azamet of Zaragoza, returned to his city with his family after they had all received baptism in Naples. Upon his return, he immediately petitioned the king to grant him the rights to houses in Zaragoza that had belonged to his family before their departure in 1492. The king, eager to demonstrate his support for those former subjects who wished to embrace the Catholic faith, graciously acceded to his request.<sup>84</sup> Another Aragonese Converso, Martin Garcia, left Spain for Genoa in order to bring back his parents and younger brothers, who had fled there during the Expulsion. His letter to the king detailed his successful efforts to convince his family members to accept Christianity before asking for a royal grant allowing them to recoup the property that they had been forced to abandon at the time of the Expulsion.<sup>85</sup>

Jews returned from North Africa as well. One such returnee, Rabbi Abraham Çalama of Castile, left Spain in 1492 and made his way to North Africa after a short stay in Portugal. For whatever reason, however, he was unable to withstand life in exile, and in 1494 he decided to convert in order to return to his hometown of Torrelaguna, north of Madrid.<sup>86</sup> The situation that had greeted Çalama and his fellow émigrés in the Maghreb was grim. A fire that swept through Fez only eight months after the arrival of many of the refugees and destroyed much of the Jewish quarter there was the final straw for many, who then decided to depart for Spain. In his elegy on the Expulsion, Rabbi Abraham ben Solomon ha-Levi Buqarat noted that the terrible conditions encountered by the exiles forced many to return to Castile and convert, adding: "This applies to such of them as came to the kingdom of Portugal and such as came to the kingdom of Fez."<sup>87</sup> His statement is noteworthy not only because it conflates the Christian and Muslim kingdoms as equally inhospitable to the Jews, but because in doing so it hints at popular sentiments about return. If the exiles were to abandon Judaism, the easiest course (at least from a purely logistical point of view) would not have been to return to Castile. Those who found themselves in North Africa could have opted to convert to Islam, and those who were in Portugal might just as well have converted and remained there, especially since the establishment of a Portuguese branch of the Inquisition was still a long way off. Their decision to return to Castile appears to have been motivated by a simple fact that is often lost amid efforts to measure the scope of the Expulsion and to memorialize its victims: the Jews who left in 1492 still considered the cities of Spain to be their true and natural home. If, after all they had endured, they were to accept the difficult choice of conversion, then they preferred to return to their native land, even if it meant retracing the perilous journey they had just completed. These Jews also had practical and emotional ties to their former home. While conversion in Portugal or North Africa offered the benefit of proximity, the cities of their birth offered them the possibility of reclaiming much, if not all, of their former lives.

## Conclusion

From the great distance of our current place in history, the first years following the Expulsion of 1492 can easily be collapsed into one relatively brief moment. To do so, however, is to lose an important sense of the period and how it was experienced by the exiles themselves. The harrowing experience of the Spanish Jews in North Africa challenges any neat division of the Jewish experience between Christian Europe and the Muslim "East." Furthermore,

the difficulty encountered by most of the Jewish refugees in reaching the greater security of the Ottoman Empire draws an important distinction between the initial years of exile and the experience of later generations of refugees. The years immediately after 1492 were filled with uncertainty that was fed by hope, fear, and rumors surrounding the possibility of the exiles' return to their ancestral homes. The various stages of movement out of Iberia sowed confusion among the refugees that must have made the decade following 1492 seem agonizingly long. The initial sanctuary they found in Portugal soon turned into catastrophe with long-term consequences. Many who hoped to leave for North Africa found the way there to be difficult, and conditions that awaited them upon arrival even worse. Those who then abandoned hopes of finding a place for themselves in the overcrowded and famine-stricken cities of the Maghreb found the situation in Italy to be little better.

In the end, some found the hardships of those first years too much to bear and accepted conversion in exchange for sustenance. Initially, the exiles of 1492 may have shuddered at the thought of worshipping a "foreign god," but many also trembled at the prospect of trying to make their way in a world in which they had no connections, little possibility for making a living, and no lord to protect them from the myriad ordeals of medieval life. Indeed, those who decided to return to Spain did so because they saw life in exile as socially, politically, and economically untenable, not because they had a theological change of heart.

Those who were able to gain a foothold in their new lands laid the first tentative foundations for the various communities that, in time, would develop into the Sephardic Diaspora. Few who left Spain in 1492 would live to see this transition completed. The Mediterranean world into which they were hurled was one of warfare, rapidly shifting political fortunes, and nearly constant movement. As the ships of Spain and Portugal ventured out into the Atlantic, those of the Ottoman Turks swept westward across the Mediterranean. Already by 1500, a series of battles had begun to rage among the cities of Italy and the Maghreb that would engulf the entire Mediterranean for most of the next century. These forces drove thousands from their homes as refugees and captives. The fractured world they produced helped to create a host of new opportunities for the former Jews of Spain, even as they condemned them to years of wandering.

## An Age of Perpetual Migration

The Lord will put you to rout before your enemies;  
you will march out against them by a single road, but flee from  
them by many roads;  
and you shall become a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth.  
—Deuteronomy 28:25

One of the defining characteristics of Jewish history in the sixteenth century was that the great expulsions of the 1490s did not lead to a neat transfer of Jewish settlement from West to East. Rather, the Jewish exodus from Spain gave way to a long and decidedly unsettled period of nearly continuous migration around the Mediterranean. Of course, large-scale immigration had always been part of Mediterranean Jewish life, as had the close social, economic, and intellectual ties that came with it. Procedures had long been established for ransoming captives, as well as accepting new settlers with varying customs, languages, and ideals and finding ways to integrate them into new communities. The formidable bonds of Judaism made all this possible. But the magnitude of the Expulsion of 1492 tested these time-honored customs in new ways. In a sense, the issues of Iberian emigration mirrored those raised by conversion a century earlier. That is to say, the conversion of an individual or a small group could be ignored, but the conversion of thousands brought a host of practical and philosophical issues into sharp relief. So, too, the movement of masses of Jews forced them and those with whom

they settled to confront matters of ethnic identity, communal association, and religious status as never before. The succession of formal expulsions and other calamities that began in 1492 drove waves of Jewish refugees across the Mediterranean in a ragged arc from West to East.

### The Travels of a Converso Weaver

An inquisitorial document that came to light in the late nineteenth century records the geographic and religious peregrinations of a certain Luis de la Isla of Illescas, Spain, whose life's story reads like a microcosm of the generation of the Expulsion.<sup>1</sup> Luis was only eight years old in 1492, but he had already begun his itinerant career, moving from the small town of Buitrago, near Soria, south to Illescas and eventually to Toledo, from whence his family entered exile. He left Spain for Algiers, but the political and economic situation of the Jewish refugees there was highly unstable, and after two months he continued on to Venice, where he lived for over three years. At this point, Luis was at an age at which he would have to begin to think about an apprenticeship and his future livelihood. Although the social and economic situation encountered by the Jews in Venice was a great improvement over that which prevailed in much of North Africa, work was hard to come by and often depended upon family connections. The paucity of opportunities available to poor Jews throughout Italy appears to have been the motivating force behind Luis's decision to leave both Venice and, ultimately, Judaism. The Spanish monarchs had made several attempts to entice their former Jews to accept baptism and repatriation to their native cities, and the option of return was, no doubt, a subject of much debate among those Jews who were clinging precariously to life in Italy and North Africa. In the account he later gave to the Inquisition, Luis reports that from Venice he journeyed to Genoa, and once there converted to Christianity and returned to Spain. He made his way back to Toledo, where the neophyte lived at the home of the archdeacon for several months before setting out for the Andalusian city of Ubeda to learn the trade of silk-weaving.

Having learned a trade, young Luis embarked on a career as an itinerant artisan, moving from town to town throughout Spain, working for more-established weavers and usually living with them in their homes. He stayed in each locale for periods of a few months to a few years and then moved on, crisscrossing the country for more than a decade. Finally, in 1506, a severe outbreak of the plague prompted Luis to leave Spain once again for Italy.

Luis's journey from Spain to Italy would also bring him into contact with former Conversos who had returned to Judaism there, and it is tempting to

see in his journey a desire to seek a similar reconnection with the religion of his forebears. These themes of religious return and cultural fealty, which were forcefully and eloquently attributed to the Conversos by Jewish chroniclers of the period, have remained an important part of the historiography on the Conversos as a driving force behind their migration out of Iberia.<sup>2</sup> However, a closer look at Luis's testimony reveals no indication that his decision to return to Italy was motivated by a longing to reconnect with Judaism, family, or community. His initial itinerary took him to Rome, Bologna, and Ferrara, but he appears to have made no efforts to involve himself in the affairs of Italy's Sephardic congregations. The inquisitorial record of his travels notes:

While in Ferrara he began to think of where he could go to make money, and he remembered having spoken with a Jew from Murcia who was a citizen of Ferrara whose name is not known. And he asked him if anyone in Ferrara practiced silk-weaving. And this Jew told a servant of his to bring him to the house of another Jew named Çabahon, originally from Guadalajara, and a maker of headdresses. And the accused went to his house, and asked him where they wove silk to make headdresses. The Jew asked him where he was from, and the accused said that he was a Castilian originally from Illescas, and that he was formerly a Jew but that he was now a Christian. The said Jew then invited the accused to come and eat one day at his home, and the accused went to eat with him one Saturday. They dined on meat stew prepared on Friday for Saturday, cooked with fish *empanadas*. And that day, Saturday, before eating, at the time when Jews pray, the accused went to the synagogue with the aforementioned Jew, arriving in the middle of the prayer service. And the Jew sat in his usual place among the other Jews, and the accused sat on a low bench among other Jewish youths because there was no other place to sit. And the accused and the Jew remained in the synagogue until all of the other Jews had completed their prayers and left the synagogue.

And after having eaten with the aforementioned Jew, the accused went out into the city and did not return to the house of the Jew until the following day, Sunday. At that time he went to his house and asked him if he had spoken with the aforementioned Murcian Jew, the silk spinner, in order that the accused might find work. And the Jew told the accused that he had spoken with the Murcian Jew, but that he told him that he could not spin silk, since it cost more to spin than to weave.<sup>3</sup>

Unable to find work, Luis continued on to Venice, where he boarded a ship bound for Naples and there met two Portuguese merchants. The three

confided in each other that they all had formerly been Jews. The merchants offered Luis the chance to join them and to work for his passage, which he did. The ship was wrecked at sea, but the three of them made it to the Albanian port of Valona (modern Vlorë), then under Ottoman rule, at the beginning of Lent. The city had become a center for former Conversos from Valencia, with some seventy Jewish families of Valencian origin settling there between 1391 and 1492.<sup>4</sup> Once in Valona, the three lived openly as Jews, observing the Sabbath and the festival of Passover. However, interestingly enough, Luis may not have joined with the others in the synagogue to pray. The text of Luis's confession continues:

The aforementioned merchants lived as Jews, observing all of the Jewish ceremonies and eating meat during Lent, and the accused kept the Sabbath with them and ate the food they ate, cooked on Friday for Saturday. And during that Lent the three celebrated the festival of unleavened bread. And sometimes the accused went to the synagogue with his masters on the Sabbath, and when they arrived at the gate of the synagogue, the accused took leave of his masters and remained outside. He would walk around the corrals outside of the synagogue and by the marsh with other young servants like himself.

In his testimony to the Inquisition, it is quite possible that Luis sought to downplay his participation in Jewish prayer services. But it is also possible that his account offers us a glimpse at the of social divisions among sixteenth-century Jews and the way they played out in religious life. Luis admits that his religious reversion led him to become a Jew in everything except prayer, a breach in observance that he evidently shared with other young servants. Considering the relatively modest size of early modern synagogues, and the degree to which young men like Luis existed on the margins of Jewish society, it is not hard to imagine servants and (especially former Conversos) accompanying their masters to the synagogue, but not praying with them.

From Valona, Luis proceeded to Salonica and continued to live openly as a Jew. There he encountered a Jewish embroiderer named Castellar whom he had known when they both lived in Valencia as Christians. The two became reacquainted, and Castellar introduced him to other Jews of Spanish origin. Most of the Jews he met in Salonica were from Valencia or central Castile (Toledo, Guadalajara, etc.) and worked as weavers of one sort or another. Eventually, Luis found work in the employ of a merchant who brought him to the city of Adrianople, and then to Istanbul, where he ran into more former Conversos whom he had known in Spain. Luis appears to have utilized

this network of former Conversos as he traveled around Asia Minor and on to Egypt. Once in Alexandria, he parted company with his most recent band of Jewish associates, who were continuing on to Cairo.

Throughout his travels, the motivation behind Luis's religious identity appears to have been primarily social and economic. The Jews among whom he lived were those with whom he shared a past and who were able to guarantee him a livelihood. It is thus not surprising that Luis's decision to remain in Alexandria coincided with his reversion to Christianity. Whether or not his Jewish connections ran out or were merely superseded by better offers from Christian merchants is unclear. At some point, he went to live at the Alexandrian *funduq* (caravanserai) that was the home of the local colony of Catalan merchants, where he presented himself as a Christian.<sup>5</sup>

Not long after reverting to Christianity, Luis encountered another group of former Conversos who attempted to entice him back to Judaism with a promise of work. Though Luis claims that he rejected their entreaties, he nonetheless admitted that he continued to attend synagogue services with some of these Jews, where he was openly threatened with violence if he did not return to the fold. It is hard to gauge the degree to which such threats represent an embellishment on the part of Luis or his inquisitor. In any event, it is not hard to imagine that he would continue to associate closely with members of each group, socializing and perhaps arguing with Jews at their synagogues while remaining Christian. The next passage may offer a clue as to the reason for Luis's adherence to Christianity. The text states that, while still in Alexandria, he entered the service of two Christian women, one Basque and one Neapolitan, whom he describes as being in love with him.<sup>6</sup>

We do not know how this love triangle was resolved, but his religious flirtations were coming to an end. Around this time, Luis contracted an illness and lost his sight. He claims that the local Jews mocked him, saying that his blindness was divine punishment for having renounced his Judaism. Whether out of guilt for his religious infidelity or as a cure for his blindness, Luis began a long process of confession and atonement. He confessed to two local friars, who gave him absolution before he left the city. From Alexandria Luis proceeded to Naples, where he once again offered his confession regarding his various transgressions and was absolved. From Naples he then returned to Valencia and from there back to Toledo. Back in Spain, Luis attended a sermon on sin and repentance and was moved to make a new confession of his various transgressions at Toledo's monastery of San Juan de los Reyes. There, a monk urged Luis to confess to the Inquisition, and after a brief hesitation, he allowed himself to be convinced.<sup>7</sup>



Luis's rootless travels around the Mediterranean, and between various religious groups, have been called a "somewhat pathetic, yet salient example of aimless wandering highlighting the hardship and confusion of unplanned emigration."<sup>8</sup> Seen from a different angle, what is most striking about Luis's story is not his aimlessness, but rather the anomalous structure of the world in which he moved. He was a young man in search of work whose real-life adventures in some ways mirror the exploits of picaresque heroes of sixteenth-century Spanish literature. What is truly fascinating about Luis's wanderings is the ease with which he passed from city to city, country to country, and in and out of households, social circles, and religious communities.

The case of Juan de Toledo, a Converso artisan from Zaragoza, echoes that of Luis de la Isla. In his inquisitorial trial in 1515 he recounted that, after having arrived in the Ottoman Empire, he was unable to support himself and decided to return to Spain. Juan converted to Christianity in Sicily and returned to Iberia by way of Mallorca and Barcelona. Once in Spain his peregrinations continued as he searched for permanent work and community.<sup>9</sup>

The salient division in such cases is not between lives that were tragic and those that were stable and secure. Sadly, warfare, poverty, hunger, and disease were so endemic throughout the Mediterranean basin during this period that the hardships encountered by the Jewish exiles were only unique in number and frequency, not in kind. Rather, what is significant here is the ease with which men like Luis and Juan were able to roam between Spain and the rest of Mediterranean and the degree to which their social universe remained relatively contained and familiar throughout. The ability of these young men to make their way across this considerable expanse of territory and within so many divergent settings without the benefit of wealth, political connections, or even familial support provides a striking image of the Sephardic Diaspora.

We have seen that the formation of a Diaspora of Iberian Jews was already underway in the fifteenth century. Indeed, the migrations of Jews around the Mediterranean following 1492 were not new phenomena. It was the scope of movement more than anything else that defined the Jewish experience in the sixteenth century. The size of the Jewish refugee population was such that the Expulsion of 1492 sent ripple effects throughout the Mediterranean world, setting off an age of nearly perpetual migration and resettlement. The Expulsion greatly magnified the problems of Jewish resettlement, challenging the traditions of hospitality and mutual aid that had developed among Mediterranean Jews over the course of the Middle Ages. In his account of the Expulsion, Gedaliah ibn Yahya wrote that the leaders of the relatively

small community of Portuguese Jews feared that they would be swamped by the mass of refugees from Spain, most of whom arrived without means of support:

The majority of these exiles were poor, and Portugal could not readily contain all these Jews. The heads of the Jewish communities in the kingdom of Portugal took counsel to decide how to deal with the large number of Spanish exiles. They decided to strenuously attempt to prevent the exiles from entering Portugal so as not to make themselves loathsome in the eyes of the king, the courtiers, or the inhabitants.

Ibn Yahya then explains how his great-grandfather, one of the leading Jewish courtiers in Portugal, attempted to step in and help:

My great grandfather of blessed memory, the notable Don Joseph ibn Yahya, objected to the great wrong in God's eyes, saying it was an act of scorn and provocation to close the gates of salvation to their brethren. He suggested that at the very least they donate half their property to feed these souls and rent boats to transport them from Portugal to Fez and other kingdoms. The [Portuguese] Jews refused to listen to the abovementioned notable. As a result the exiles were forced to negotiate with the king of Portugal for entry; making an agreement as well that if required to leave, they would pay a levy of two ducats per person. Some time later, due to an outbreak of pestilence in the city, the exiles wished to depart, and approached the king with a request for boats.<sup>10</sup>

Whether or not we accept Ibn Yahya's assertion that his family represented the lone dissenting voice in the face of such native opposition to the Spanish exiles, his description of the sorts of problems facing Jewish migrants rings true and is echoed by similar reactions to the refugees in Italy. The influx of such a large number of generally impoverished refugees threatened to overwhelm local Jewish communities. The financial and logistical demands of the exiles were massive and forced the Jews of Portugal, Italy, and North Africa to face a host of difficult decisions.

Indeed, the basic hallmarks of the situation in Portugal as described by Ibn Yahya were repeated time and again as the refugees made their way throughout the Mediterranean. These include the need to support the majority of newcomers almost immediately; the need to help pay for their journey on to the next locale, wherever that might be; and, perhaps most importantly, the need to manage the tension between the imagined community of

Jews based on shared religious bonds and the very real social and political associations of various groups of Jews. It was the latter that often took precedence in times of crisis.

The causes for the continual migration of the groups of Jews around the Mediterranean were essentially twofold. The first and most obvious factor was their inability to find safe harbor that could afford them both security and prosperity. Even when local Jewries did offer food and shelter to the dispossessed, the latter still retained their identity as a separate collective that would have to negotiate with the local rulers in order to obtain rights of settlement or safe passage.<sup>11</sup> As groups of refugees set out from one locale, they were often unsure as to where they would find a measure of safety. When the Jews of the Sicilian city of Trapani prepared to leave in 1492, they drew up a contract with a Neapolitan captain that made explicit the latter's responsibility to continue to transport the group until they could find a place to settle.<sup>12</sup>

The Jews' difficulties in finding adequate places for resettlement were further exacerbated by another grand theme of the period—kidnapping and enslavement. Piracy was a fact of life along all of the principal trade routes of the early modern Mediterranean, and it overlapped with a steady increase in siege warfare and coastal raids from southern Spain to Rhodes.<sup>13</sup> Both led to the capture of men and women who were either held for ransom or sold into slavery.

In addition to forcibly moving captives from one region to another, Mediterranean slavery also forced many to pass between religious communities. Muslim corsairs, many of whom operated in the service of the Ottoman sultans, captured tens of thousands of Christians, who became converts to Islam. These victims were commonly referred to as *renegados* (renegades) by other Christians. While some integrated into Muslim society, many remained a people apart, much like the Conversos of Spain and Portugal. When the Jesuit missionary João Nunes Barreto engaged in theological debates with the leading Jewish scholars of Tetuan, the language barrier between the disputants was overcome through the use of a Christian *renegado* who had embraced Islam.<sup>14</sup> In Algiers, the Ottomans used renegades from all over the Mediterranean as part of the city's civic administration.<sup>15</sup>

The plague of enslavement did not bypass the Jews.<sup>16</sup> Contemporary Jewish and Christian chronicles alike note that the Ottoman conquest of Rhodes in 1522 resulted in the release of Jewish captives who had been forced to convert to Christianity, and who were then allowed to return Judaism.<sup>17</sup> The Jews captured by the Spanish at Bugia and Tripoli in 1510 were sold as slaves in Sicily.<sup>18</sup> In such instances, most able-bodied men, Jewish or other, were sent to row in Mediterranean galleys. Women who were not ransomed back to

Jewish communities could become household servants, and Jewish children were often baptized and raised as Christians. In one heartrending case, a Jewish child who was captured and baptized in Sicily kept alive the memory of his family and former religion until adulthood. Once grown, he set out to find his family and return to his ancestral faith, only to be rejected by his father, who was unwilling to revisit the pain of his family's ordeal.<sup>19</sup> Records of such incidents that were preserved by chance in the rabbinic documentation of the day offer brief glimpses of what must have been a relatively widespread phenomenon.

### North Africa and the Iberian Colonial Frontier

The coastal cities of North Africa proved to be particularly fertile ground for slave taking. Writing on the fate of the Jews of Tlemçen after the city's capture by the Spaniards, one Jewish exile observed: "about 1,500 Jews were killed or taken prisoner. Some Jews went to Fez to ask the local community to ransom the captives, but they could not redeem all of them because of their great number and because the prices being demanded were higher than they were worth."<sup>20</sup> The story of the intense battles for political, economic, and ideological dominance in the Italian Peninsula during the sixteenth century is well known in the West. By contrast, the contemporary struggle for control of the Maghreb—a decades-long drama that involved a cast every bit as colorful and diverse as that in the Italian context—has received much less attention by modern scholarship.

The Jews who settled in North Africa often found themselves caught in the internecine warfare among Muslims, as well as the shifting alliances formed to repel the Spanish and Portuguese, who were bent on establishing a foothold in the region.<sup>21</sup> The Jewish chronicler Samuel ibn Danan describes how the Jews of Fez became embroiled in the heady mix of battles, intrigues, and double-crosses among Arab, Turkish, and Christian forces during the war of 1553–54. When the battle for Fez spilled over into the Jewish quarter there, a Jewish notable from Algiers intervened on behalf of the beleaguered community and obtained a safe-conduct for them from the city's new Turkish sultan, Muolay Muhammed Saleh. As control of the city shifted back and forth between Turkish and Arab forces, the Jews were forced to make continual payments of tribute to a succession of rulers in order to remain protected. The fact that the various Muslim rulers chose to accept this tribute rather than despoil the Jews and drive them out is some indication of the preferred method of dealing with a minority that promised long-term benefits.<sup>22</sup>

Native Jews and recent arrivals alike were caught in the endless battles between a shifting cast of Christian and Muslim forces and suffered greatly. In 1549, for instance, when civil strife once again gripped the city of Fez and threatened all its inhabitants with starvation, hundreds of Jews fled to the nearby town of Meknes.<sup>23</sup> Travel in North Africa was always a precarious venture, and Jews only attempted large-scale migrations as a last resort. In one instance, Jews fleeing Portuguese territory were attacked by bands of armed Bedouin who stripped them of what meager possessions they still had.<sup>24</sup> It was not until the mid-sixteenth century that the situation in the Maghreb began to stabilize. Under the Saadian Dynasty (c. 1549–1650) Jews were protected as an integral part of the Saharan Gold Trade. The second Saadian leader, Abdalla, moved the Moroccan capital to Marrakech and built a new Jewish quarter there.<sup>25</sup>

The encroachment of Spanish, Portuguese, and even Ottoman forces into the Maghreb contributed to the atmosphere of political instability. During the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the Spanish and Portuguese both sought to expand their military presence beyond Iberia as a means of protecting their trade routes and acquiring new territories. The Portuguese captured the Mediterranean port of Ceuta in 1415 and established a series of forts along Morocco's Atlantic coast in the 1470s and 1480s.<sup>26</sup> Portuguese interest in West Africa was due to its connection to the trans-Saharan gold trade and its position as an important way station along a new route to India and the Far East. By 1471, they had succeeded in establishing themselves on the coast of modern-day Ghana, a short journey from the rich gold mines of the interior.<sup>27</sup> Not to be outdone, the Spanish engaged in their own wars of conquest in the region throughout much of the century. Though King Ferdinand succeeded in obtaining papal recognition of his attacks on Maghrebi cities as a "crusade," Spain's activity in North Africa remained bound up with its efforts to counter French influence in Italy.<sup>28</sup> This also brought the Catholic Monarchs and their successors into greater proximity (and eventually open conflict) with the Ottomans, who had begun their own rapid expansion into the Mediterranean from the east.

The Spanish crown's efforts to expel the Jews were contradicted by the simultaneous conquest of Muslim lands that contained Jewish communities. The Spanish response to reencountering Jews in their new territories was to sell them into captivity, as was the case at Oran and Tripoli in 1509–10. The fate of these Jews was not quickly forgotten by others in the region, and when the army of Charles V was stopped at Algiers in 1541, the Jews there composed liturgical poems praising their delivery from destruction and henceforth commemorated the anniversary of the battle with days of fasting

and celebration.<sup>29</sup> Portuguese reaction to this problem was more ambivalent. Dom Manuel accepted the presence of Jews in the North African towns under his control, establishing Jewish quarters there in 1512 and 1514.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, Count Vasco Coutinho de Borba, the Portuguese governor of the Moroccan city of Arzila, forbade Jewish and Converso refugees to settle in the nearby Muslim stronghold of Qsar al-Kabir.<sup>31</sup>

The Europeans' position in North Africa remained precarious for decades, which greatly contributed to their attitudes toward their acquisition of new Jewish subjects. A combination of economic need and general political disorder allowed for Jews to reside in these Iberian strongholds. Even Dom João III (r. 1521–57), whose prohibition of crypto-Jewish activity was decidedly more aggressive than that of his predecessor, had great difficulty in policing the former Conversos in his North African territories. The Portuguese representative in Fez complained of merchants who acted as Jews in Fez and Christians in Portugal, but to little avail.<sup>32</sup>

In many ways, North Africa represented something of an expansion of the Christian *reconquista* and a continuation of its distinctive mix of aggression and accommodation between different religious cultures. Recently exiled Jews, immediately recognizing the situation for what it was, promptly reprised their traditional role as economic and political intermediaries between feuding parties. Conversos living in Portuguese garrisons such as Safi and Azemmour were able to access the trade routes of Muslim North Africa through their connections with Jewish merchants. The latter provided Conversos with liquid capital and helped to bring Portuguese and Asian commodities from Lisbon into North Africa markets, even as Muslim forces fought to repel the Portuguese from the region.<sup>33</sup>

The linguistic, cultural, and social bonds that the former Spanish and Portuguese Jews shared with Iberian Christians ("Old" and "New") made them indispensable to royal plans of political expansion in Africa and Asia. Jewish status was dependent on these dreams of conquest, and patterns of Jewish migration followed the course of imperial needs. The long reign of João III, known as "the Pious," represented a decided shift away from the more patient and lenient policies of Manuel I with regard to the Conversos and their relationship to professing Jews in Portugal's overseas territories. Yet, throughout the sixteenth century, there was always a frontier, always an edge of empire in which the need for the economic and diplomatic skills provided by Jews allowed them to operate, regardless of the hardening policies of the royal administration.

Jews of Iberian heritage remained a fixture in Portuguese North Africa until the mid-sixteenth century, when royal interest in preserving its

colonial possessions there began to flag and inquisitorial activity in the region increased. As early as 1529, the great Portuguese fortresses in Morocco were becoming hugely expensive to maintain, and the crown began to consider scaling back the number of soldiers garrisoned there. By 1550, the Portuguese presence in Morocco was restricted to one Atlantic port, Mazagan, and two cities on the Mediterranean coast, Ceuta and Tangier. The principal centers of Portuguese Converso-Jewish trade then relocated to Istanbul, Antwerp, and northern Italy, first in Venice and then in Ferrara.

Small settlements of New Christians and Jews still thrived for decades in and around Portugal's more distant colonies in western India.<sup>34</sup> A group of Spanish and Portuguese Jews settled on the island of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf and helped to develop the local community of prosperous merchants and bankers there. The community functioned as a commercial link between Ottoman and Levantine Jews in the West and those living along the Malabar Coast of India to the East.<sup>35</sup> Portuguese governors in Asia tried to limit the activity of Jews in the territories under their command, but Jews remained an integral part of these colonies until the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The presence of Jews in Portuguese territories and their close relationship with Conversos therein was officially undesirable, but effectively unavoidable. Even Afonso de Albuquerque, a noted and virulent enemy of the Jews, employed them as diplomats in his establishment of a Portuguese presence in India.<sup>36</sup>

It was not until the close of the century that the policies of religious conformity and exclusion overtook the Jews operating on the fringes of the Portuguese world. As the anti-Jewish policies of Lisbon and Madrid became implemented even in the farthest reaches of their empires, professing and crypto-Jews alike began to sever their ties with Iberia and relocate to the new Jewish centers of northern Europe. The Jews themselves held fast to their Iberian identities, continuing to think of themselves as members of a society that was religiously Jewish, but culturally Portuguese.<sup>37</sup> They remained committed to their lives within the expanding Portuguese empire until, in the words of one historian, "they ran out of possibilities."<sup>38</sup>

The union of Portugal and Spain that took place in 1580 reintroduced thousands of "Jews" to Spain in the form of Portuguese Conversos who had been more successful in preserving their Jewish practices than their Spanish counterparts. These crypto-Jews soon took up residence in all of the major cities of the New World. The Conversos responded to the revival in inquisitorial activity in much the same way that they had throughout the sixteenth century—they sought refuge in expansive frontier zones in which their skills and mercantile connections outweighed any concerns over their religious

orientation. With the decline in opportunities in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in North Africa and Asia, a new wave of Converso merchants and administrators established themselves in the Americas. The colonial territories were vast and inquisitorial presence was slight, with only two tribunals operating, in Mexico (after 1571) and Cartagena (after 1610). Even these appear to have been more interested in investigating charges of witchcraft and sorcery than in rooting out Judaizing. But this situation was not to last. In time, the fears that the Conversos were conspiring with Spain's enemies reached the New World, and in the 1630s and 1640s, the Holy Office there became increasingly interested in Converso activity. They confiscated large amounts of goods and property and held a massive *auto da fé* against suspected Judaizers in Lima in 1639.<sup>39</sup> The vicissitudes that characterized Jewish life in the Mediterranean throughout much of the 1500s would be repeated in many of the Jewish and Converso settlements in the Americas during the following century. As in the Mediterranean context, the degree to which colonial settlers could openly profess their adherence to Judaism, should they be so inclined, depended on the ever-shifting political landscape of the Americas.<sup>40</sup>

### From West and East, and Back

The unsettled situation in North Africa and Italy coincided with, and helped to engender, the establishment of Sephardic settlements in the eastern Mediterranean. By the second quarter of the sixteenth century, the Iberian refugees had begun to reach the cities of the Ottoman Empire in large numbers, and the situation they encountered there must have appeared remarkably stable in comparison to the prevailing conditions in most other Mediterranean regions. Iberian Jews joined others from Sicily and Naples who were increasingly driven eastward over the course of the century.<sup>41</sup>

By 1517, the Pax Ottomanica had spread, although at times only lightly, across the whole of the eastern Mediterranean from the Adriatic coast to Egypt. During the reign of Suleiman the Great (1520–66), the Ottomans broadened and consolidated their territorial holdings in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. It was here, in the rapidly expanding empire of the Turks, that Jews found greater prosperity and stability than anywhere else in either the Christian or Muslim world.

Both the popular collective memory of the Diaspora of the Jews from medieval Spain and its treatment in modern scholarship emphasize the different reception of the Jews in the Christian West and the Muslim East. The standard practice has been to chronicle the travails of the Jewish refugees



in Christian lands, particularly Portugal and Italy, and to juxtapose this experience to the establishment of large and prosperous communities in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>42</sup> The example of the era's most famous Converso émigrés, Doña Gracia Nasi and her nephew, Joseph Mendes, has long helped to support this narrative. These two were among the wealthiest and most influential Jews of the early modern period, and their biographies have proved irresistible to modern scholars.<sup>43</sup> Born into Converso merchant families in Portugal, they fled before the specter of the oncoming Inquisition in the 1530s, with Gracia leading the way first to Antwerp and then on to Ferrara, Venice, and eventually Istanbul. Along the way they reverted openly to Judaism, becoming champions of Jewish scholarship, founding synagogues, and aiding in the resettlement of other crypto-Jews to Ottoman lands. Both became courtiers and emerged as central figures in Jewish society in Istanbul. Gracia famously engineered a boycott of the Italian port of Ancona in response to the attack on Conversos there, and Joseph was granted the titles Duke of Naxos and Lord of Tiberias.

The fascinating personal narratives of Doña Gracia and Joseph Mendes have strengthened the image of the formation of the Sephardic Diaspora as a neat and unidirectional resettlement. However, it is more accurate to speak of a series of migrations back and forth across the Mediterranean and into northern Europe rather than a steady movement of Spanish Jewry from West to East. Jews bonded together into makeshift communities in 1492 as they sought rights for resettlement, but their continued migration in subsequent decades militated against prolonged associations of this kind. Simply put, the rootless nature of Jewish life during most of the sixteenth century favored the movement of individuals and small groups over that of whole communities. Mediterranean society was, at its heart, a sea of small, interlocking, and tightly organized groups defined by kinship, gender, and even urban neighborhoods.<sup>44</sup> In the case of the Jewish refugees, some wandered from place to place seeking a living wage, while others settled down only to be uprooted by secondary expulsions, before moving on to Ottoman lands.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, the exiles of 1492 and their descendants maintained important ties to the cities of Christian Europe throughout the sixteenth century and beyond. Even those Jews who established themselves in the Muslim lands of North Africa and the Ottoman Empire preserved economic and political ties with Iberia and Italy. The economic vitality of Ottoman society also prompted continued migration within the empire for the children and grandchildren of the original refugees. However, those Jews who found safe haven in Ottoman lands were not completely immune to the consequences of political upheaval. The conquest of Egypt in 1516–17 caused Jews, including

some recent arrivals from Spain, to be (in their view) “exiled” to Istanbul.<sup>46</sup> Jews were also impelled to new areas of settlement by a variety of other factors, from the vicissitudes of early modern trade to the effects of burdensome taxes and political instability.<sup>47</sup> New economic opportunities drew Jews to centers such as Istanbul, Salonica, and Izmir as well as smaller cities such as Ragusa, Candia, and Safed. This last city, home of a burgeoning silk industry for much of the century, also evolved into the preeminent center for kabbalistic learning in the Jewish world. Thus, in addition to the constant draw of employment and wealth, some cities attracted Jews due to their religious and cultural stature. Jerusalem remained a center for pilgrimage and rivaled Safed as a destination for Jewish scholars and students. The size, diversity, and wealth of the Jewish communities of Salonica and Istanbul helped them foster a number of *yeshivot* (academies of advanced study) and scholarly circles.

The itinerant life of Mediterranean Jewry during the sixteenth century also brought many back into Christian Europe. By the second quarter of the century, the procession of Jewish merchants and settlers heading westward paralleled that of Jews seeking shelter in Ottoman lands.<sup>48</sup> Ottoman policies toward the Jews did not change drastically after 1530, but the economic opportunities to be found in the empire did. As a result, many second-generation Jewish exiles from Spain made their way to Venice in search of greener commercial pastures, just as many Portuguese Conversos settled throughout Italy, France, and the Netherlands.<sup>49</sup>

In 1590, long after Salonica had emerged as one of the most important commercial and intellectual centers in the Jewish world, the rabbinic scholar Yosef Pardo left that city in search of work in Christian Europe. He resided in Venice for a time before settling in Amsterdam.<sup>50</sup> By the mid-sixteenth century, Converso settlement had already begun to expand into new areas of Christian Europe, particularly the Low Countries and France.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, Converso merchants had begun to take advantage of France’s welcoming policy toward foreign merchants to obtain official *lettres patentes* that stated: “Since the merchants and other Portuguese, called the New Christians, have by special people they sent here, informed [us] that having become familiar, after conducting their affairs in our kingdom for some time, with the great and good justice exercised within it . . . ”<sup>52</sup> This charter was renewed in 1574 by Henry III with the added provision: “The Spanish and Portuguese here [in Bordeaux] may live in freedom and security, without any enquiry being made into their lives or otherwise.”<sup>53</sup> While professing Jews were not allowed in France, this subterfuge, in which the French monarchs so readily engaged, shows them to be well aware of the religious

tendencies of the merchants they called “New Christians.” The *lettres patentes* that they received from the crown allowed the Conversos to settle anywhere in France, but the vast majority chose to remain in the southwestern part of the kingdom.<sup>54</sup>

Many Portuguese Conversos of the second and third generation thus chose to resettle in Christian Europe rather than in Muslim lands, and to accept lives as crypto-Jews instead of returning openly to their ancestral faith. Unlike the famous members of the Nasi and Mendes clans, most sixteenth-century Conversos were not rich courtiers and only a portion reverted openly and completely to Judaism. Many did seek to escape the attention of the Inquisition by leaving Portugal, but they also made sure to sustain their lucrative commercial contacts with Lisbon. Indeed, the potential impact of the boycott of Ancona by Jewish merchants was due to the fact that southern Italy formed part of an important trading network of Converso merchants and bankers throughout much of the sixteenth century. This network, which connected Jewish merchants in Ottoman lands to Jewish and Converso merchants in northern Italy, Flanders, and Lisbon, was actually more emblematic of the ambivalent relationship of the Converso Diaspora to Portugal than the more defiant posture of its most renowned representatives.<sup>55</sup>

The shifting political fortunes of the various Italian polities meant that the decrees restricting Jewish immigration and settlement were often short-lived. Genoa expelled their Jews several times over the course of the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>56</sup> The same was true in Naples, where Jews moved out in waves after moments of extreme hardship and persecution in the 1490s, 1511, 1514, and 1534, before finally being expelled from the region in 1541.<sup>57</sup> Throughout this period, Jews continued to accept baptism as a means out of their predicament.<sup>58</sup> Policies regarding Jewish settlement in Italy continued to fluctuate throughout the middle decades of the century under the opposing influences of increased economic competition between Italian cities and the increased religious assault of the Counter-Reformation papacy. The abandonment of longstanding papal protection of the Jews and of liberal attitudes toward Jewish and Converso merchants in Italy was a product of a broader attack on reform movements in general.

Pope Paul III (r. 1534–49) actively protected the Jews in the Papal States. He sheltered those expelled from Naples and guaranteed their safe passage to both Muslim and Christian lands.<sup>59</sup> The extent of the pope’s willingness to shelter Jews of Iberian origin is reflected by a truly extraordinary piece of legislation issued in 1547. The bull, which allowed Portuguese Conversos who had reverted back to Judaism to settle in Ancona in order to stimulate trade with the Balkans, echoed a similar grant made by Duke Ercole II of Ferrara

in 1538. Thus, at the same time that the exiles of 1492 and their descendants were beginning to make their way to the Ottoman Empire in large numbers, settlement in Christian Italy remained a viable option. Papal participation in this process is striking. It was one thing for secular rulers like Ercole II or Manuel I of Portugal to openly allow such heretical acts in the name of economic and political objectives, but it was quite another coming from the pope.

Paul III's benevolent approach to the Jews was later reversed under the papacies of Pius IV (r. 1559–65) and Pius V (r. 1566–72). The first, in the reactionary spirit of the Counter-Reformation, sought to revive and implement a host of anti-Jewish measures, beginning with the burning of the Talmud in Rome, Bologna, Florence, Venice, Crete, and Corfu in 1553. Two years later he issued the bull *Cum nimis absurdum*, in which he called for the ghettoization of the Jews living in the Papal States, and in an even more direct reversal of the policies of his predecessor, ordered the execution and burning of a group of Converso merchants in Ancona for having reverted to Judaism.<sup>60</sup> This aggressive attack on Jewish status and mobility was continued by Pius V, who expelled the Jews from the Papal States in 1569. The enforcement of these new anti-Jewish measures, while at first erratic, eventually solidified into a new status quo that greatly restricted Jewish settlement and social mobility throughout the Italian Peninsula. For several decades, however, the degree to which these policies would become permanent was not clear, least of all to the Jews themselves. The litany of anti-Jewish laws and expulsion decrees did not completely dissuade the Jews from settlement in Italy. Even after 1569, small Jewish settlements were allowed to stay on in Rome and Ancona. Jewish merchants, bankers, and artisans waited and watched. Would the policies of the next pope echo the more liberal ones of Paul III or be like those of his successors? Where might a duke appear who was willing to grant extensive settlement privileges to the Jews and ignore the religious past of former Conversos in order to stimulate trade?

### Crusaders, Pragmatists, and Resourceful Jews

In seeking to understand the motivation behind Jewish settlement patterns in the second and third generations after 1492, it is perhaps most helpful to think of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean as a place defined by the contrasting forces of pragmatic mercantilism and visceral religious passions. One of the points of continuity between medieval and early modern Jewish society was a hard-won ability to withstand outbreaks of violence and the deleterious effects of anti-Jewish legislation. Jews were resigned to the

calumnies and expressions of hatred issued by their Muslim and Christian neighbors and did not relocate due to such hostility. As had been the case throughout the Middle Ages, early modern Jews continued to demonstrate a willingness to accept an atmosphere of religious tension, even one marked by frequent outbursts of anti-Jewish violence, so long as they prospered and retained a measure of hope that local authorities could be petitioned or bribed to keep matters from escalating too far.

The migration of Conversos out of Portugal illustrates the cautious and pragmatic attitude that was a hallmark of the early Sephardic Diaspora. Despite the obvious difficulties of life as a New Christian in sixteenth-century Portugal, many Conversos nonetheless opted to stay in that kingdom even when emigration became an option. They only left when denunciations and subsequent attention of the Inquisition forced them to emigrate.<sup>61</sup> Before the advent of the Portuguese Inquisition, there was relatively little impetus for the forced converts to leave Iberia. Dom Manuel made it relatively clear that the Crown had little interest in harassing New Christians with regard to their religious beliefs. After 1497, many Conversos successfully petitioned the king for official declarations of “purity,” which stated that they were free from Jewish blood. Portuguese Conversos subsequently attained the highest levels of authority within the kingdom’s secular and religious institutions.<sup>62</sup>

The path to the establishment of the Portuguese Inquisition was slow and meandering, foreshadowing the uneven manner in which it was to function during the succeeding century. During this period, the Portuguese Conversos developed a formidable diplomatic network, with particularly active blocs in Lisbon and Rome. In addition to securing privileges for their mercantile “nation,” these Conversos spent considerable money and energy to avoid or postpone the expansion of the Holy Office in Portugal. The Portuguese Inquisition was only made official in 1536, and its sentences were suspended in 1544–47.<sup>63</sup> Conversos’ efforts to impede the progress of the Holy Office in Portugal were ultimately unsuccessful, but temporary success in delaying their fate sustained their hopes and colored their worldview for several generations. As a result, the possibility of returning to Portugal for the Converso émigrés of the sixteenth century was even more enticing than that of returning to Spain for the generation of 1492.

A rabbinic responsum of the era records the case of a Converso merchant who set out from inquisitorial Portugal in the hopes of establishing a new life as a Jew in the Ottoman Empire. However, having reached his destination, he was robbed of all his possessions, and opted to return to Portugal and nominal Christianity rather than remain Jewish and destitute.<sup>64</sup> The example is illustrative of a wider phenomenon. Portuguese Conversos continued to live

as “cultural commuters” between Christianity and Judaism, as they moved between Portugal and the various lands where Judaism could be practiced openly.<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

Over the course of the seventeenth century, the Sephardic Diaspora would produce two separate branches: one centered in Muslim lands, and one in northern Europe.<sup>66</sup> Each would develop its own distinct cultural characteristics, adapting many of the traits of its respective host societies. However, this regional and cultural divide cannot be projected back onto the period of the first Sephardic settlements in the sixteenth century. In this earlier period, Jews and Conversos alike pursued opportunities for safety and economic stability wherever they might be found. For many of those in the second and third generation of Jewish exiles from Spain, this quest meant remaining within the bounds of Christian Europe. Religious freedom was important to many of the exiles, but it was rarely a determining factor in their decision of where to settle.

The long and often serpentine process of the Expulsion of 1492 was followed by decades of Jewish migration throughout the Mediterranean and beyond. This age of constant movement of Jewish groups resists the concept of Sephardic resettlement from the Christian West to the Ottoman East. As the story of Luis de la Isla illustrates, the generations of Jews of Spanish heritage passed back and forth between Christian and Muslim lands, and often between Christianity and Judaism as well. One of the greatest challenges to the survival and integrity of Jewish society during this long period of movement and communal upheaval was how to reconstruct viable communal structures at a time when so many factors seem to conspire against them. It is to this question that we will now turn.

## Community and Control in the Sephardic Diaspora

Each group wanted to maintain the customs and traditions of their fathers, which were distinct.

—Isaac ben Immanuel de Lattes

For those Jews who survived the first calamitous years after 1492, the question soon arose as to how they would organize themselves in exile. The general instability of Jewish life during much of the sixteenth century played a crucial role in this process. As with the migration of Iberian Jewry across the Mediterranean, the establishment and maintenance of new communities followed a long and circuitous route that progressed haltingly and with great difficulty. Yet it is precisely the indeterminate nature of this society in transition that allows for a glimpse of the inner workings of Jewish political life. It is common to view Jewish history as a subset of the general history of the societies in which the Jews lived. As a result, the political life of the Jewish community often is understood in terms of the relative tolerance or interference of Christian and Muslim governments. However, as we shall see, the obstacles to the formation of functional, autonomous Jewish governments during the sixteenth century were primarily internal, not external. From this perspective, we learn that communal organization in the early Sephardic Diaspora gave

rise to multiple categories of belonging under the broader rubric of Jewish society.

Over the course of the sixteenth century, the Sephardic world was built upon an organic manifestation of cultural identity, but it was also shaped by a core tension within this nascent Diaspora community between the government and the governed. That is to say, the way in which successive generations of Sephardic Jews established and maintained political frameworks in their new lands of settlement highlights the distinction between the formation of sociocultural and sociopolitical communities. While shared cultural heritage was an important factor in organizing Iberian Jews into new congregations and communities, this same process was also marked by widespread conflict between the vast majority of the Jewish polity and those Jews who sought to position themselves as their communities' principal governing agents.

Traditionally, studies of Jewish communal organization in the Middle Ages have focused on the relationship between the Jews and their host societies, particularly regarding the question of political autonomy. Salon Baron, perhaps the most influential historian of Jewish social and political organization, characterized the premodern Jewish community as one that possessed "almost 'extraterritorial' status and 'sovereign' political powers."<sup>1</sup> Scholars who have followed this same basic approach have assumed that forces external to the Jewish community determined the nature of Jewish political life, rather than the attitudes and actions of that community's constituent blocs. As discussed in chapter 1, this presumptive notion of a natural political solidarity among medieval Jews fails to capture the challenges and complexities the exiles faced in building new communities in their adopted homes. The present chapter will examine the ways in which the obstacles to Jewish self-government that were so prevalent before 1492 continued to shape Jewish communities in their transition from Iberia to Diaspora, and from the medieval to the early modern world.

### The Concept of the Jewish Polity

As had been the case throughout the Middle Ages, the terms used by sixteenth-century Jews to express the concept of community, polity, or nation did not have precise and universally agreed-upon definitions. Terms such as *kahal*, *kehilla*, and *'edah* were used interchangeably to denote a variety of corporate Jewish entities. This diversity in terminology reflects an implicit recognition of the amorphous nature of Jewish political life. Early modern Jews had a keen awareness of the multiplicity of categories of belonging and the ways in which they overlapped. Furthermore, this awareness appears to have led many Jews



to manipulate these categories and the various benefits and restrictions that they offered in order to best help themselves. The initial generation of Spanish exiles may indeed have shared a general cultural identity, but this common if somewhat amorphous cultural profile did not extend to the way they organized politically. One sixteenth-century rabbinic authority articulated the concept as follows: "members of a *kahal* are not subordinated to any other *kahal* even if the number of members of the others is greater, because each *kahal* is a town in and of itself and there is no town that is subordinated to another."<sup>2</sup>

The independent Jewish community with its representative council remained the ideal format for Jewish social and political organization throughout the early modern period. In most Mediterranean cities, however, this model remained more of a legal abstraction than a reality. At times, congregations (*kehalim*) functioned as full communities (*kehillot*) in which members were bound together in an elaborate web of reciprocal relationships. At other times, communities were little more than a collection of families and visiting merchants, with no corporate identity beyond the need to meet the payment of government taxes.<sup>3</sup> The leaders of these Jewish polities appointed ad hoc courts to deal with a plethora of legal issues, following a tradition that had already become widespread in Iberia. These judges would then decide if the cases that came before them needed to be referred to the great rabbinic authorities of the day.

Over the course of the Middle Ages, Jews living throughout the Mediterranean basin and its European hinterlands had developed a system of political organization that had created a measure of political stability for its members while still allowing for a certain level of immigration and exchange with other communities. The medieval Jewish system of self-government was derived from the vast corpus of rabbinic law and the more idiosyncratic dictates of local custom. This intricate legal framework of Jewish society often fell short of the ideals of autonomy, mutual aid, and care for the weaker members of the group. Instead, Jewish communal leaders were continuously engaged in a process of accommodating a variety of external and internal forces in order for Jewish government to function. Much like its Christian municipal counterpart, the Jewish *kahal* generally governed through a system of informal connections with the various institutions of Christian society. As we shall see, Jewish political life was also dominated by power struggles between leading families in a given locale, and between this fractious leadership and the recalcitrant masses, who often resisted the communal council's efforts at fiscal and moral control.

On the whole, the policies of both Christian and Muslim rulers with regard to their Jewish subjects were distinctly conservative. The extension or

curtailment of Jewish rights oscillated over the course of the sixteenth century, and the level of protection afforded the Jews differed from one ruler to the next. But neither group demonstrated a desire to change the status quo with regard to Jewish communal organization in the lands that came under their control. Even with regard to the question of Jewish rights, the popes and dukes of Counter-Reformation Italy were ultimately influenced as much by financial need and by the problems caused by the spasms of Jewish refugees that passed through their domains as they were by shifting ideological concerns.

In Christian Europe, religious attitudes toward the Jews played an important role in determining where Jews could settle, and for how long. Yet, once settlement rights were granted, the principal external factor that shaped the nature of Jewish communal organization was that of taxes owed to the non-Jewish government. The situation was the same throughout the Islamic world. The Ottoman government, which by the mid-sixteenth century had become the regime under which the majority of Iberian Jews had come to reside, did not demonstrate any particular interest in the cultural identities of its Jewish communities. Nor was the Ottoman government concerned about the religious profiles of Jews who may or may not have passed through baptism, as was the case in Christian Europe. The defining factor with regard to Ottoman Jews was their status as a religious minority (*dhimmi* or *zimmi*) that was required to observe a certain set of rules and pay a poll tax. The Jews were allowed to organize themselves as they saw fit, as long as their taxes were paid in a regular and timely fashion.

Strictly speaking, the Muslim legal system did not recognize any corporate Jewish entity beyond the essential religious divisions between Muslims and *dhimmis*. However, the realities of daily life made such adherence to legal theory impractical. The Jews residing in Ottoman lands separated themselves according to language and custom, and formed congregations in which the wealthier families stood as representatives for the rest of the community. The Ottomans acknowledged the efficacy of using prominent individuals as representatives of these different Jewish communities as a means of governing the Jews in a given locale. The result was a system that gave tacit, if not explicit, recognition to the existence of separate Jewish polities in which certain members had the right to coerce the association and participation of the rest. Muslim officials generally approached the Jews living in their cities as individuals, but also employed terminology that distinguished some as the political leaders of Jewish society. In so doing, they approximated Jewish titles and positions with their own equally elastic terms. Corporate entities such as the congregation or the community were rendered as *ta'ifa* or

*cemaat*, while their leaders were alternately referred to as *mutakallim* (representatives) or *shuyukh al-yahud* (Jewish elders).<sup>4</sup>

The relationship between the would-be leaders of the Sephardic Diaspora and the general authorities of the lands in which they came to settle was therefore the first, but in many ways the easiest, challenge that confronted them. Muslim and Christian authorities could usually be counted on to follow their own self-interest and were often susceptible to bribery of one form or another. What these leaders sought from Christian and Muslim authorities was the right to settle, followed by a measure of protection. Jews saw the leaders of these lands as their lords and turned to them for justice without hesitation.<sup>5</sup> The cooperation of these new lords was generally easier to obtain than that of the Jewish populace. The task of gaining and maintaining Jewish fealty and recognition of authority was, by far, the more intractable problem facing Jewish leaders as they attempted to reconstitute their old political structures in their new homes.

### Toward Community

Amid the chaos of the successive expulsions, wars, and other ordeals to which they were subjected, the Iberian émigrés began to take the first tentative steps toward organizing themselves into new communities. In addition to the bonds of friendship and family, cultural factors such as clothing and language acted as important signifiers of community and ethnic identity, helping to guide the refugees toward one another.<sup>6</sup> Jews in Muslim Iberia had dressed “in the Moorish style” prior to 1492, a custom they preserved after settling in North Africa.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, Jews from Christian Iberia continued to favor European styles and were distinguished by their use of hooded capes.<sup>8</sup> David ibn Abi Zimra, a leading rabbinic scholar among the first-generation exiles from Spain, stated openly that linguistic and regional ties continued to be the primary foundation upon which political associations were formed: “And it is the custom throughout the Jewish Diaspora that Jews who are of the same city of origin or language make a community for themselves, and do not mix with men of a different city or language.” Ibn Abi Zimra not only observed the practice of setting up communities in this way, he even went so far as to justify it on religious grounds and to condemn any other practice:

With the breaking away of groups from their fellow townsmen and their common language, there is also a corresponding breaking up of devout hearts; nor are their prayers of praise to God united. But if they are of one city of origin and or one language then will peace dwell among them, for

each one will feel at home and know his status. . . . We should not mix up the communities and set up new classifications.<sup>9</sup>

Another prominent rabbinic authority, Joseph ibn Lev, also noted the importance of language as a basis for communal organization:

In Salonica, every Jew speaks his own native tongue. When the exiles arrived, each vernacular group founded an independent congregation, there being no mobility from one congregation to another. Each congregation is responsible for its poor members, and each is entered separately in the imperial register. Thus each congregation appears to function as an independent city.<sup>10</sup>

Notwithstanding Ibn Lev's observation, the independence and lack of mobility to which he alludes are more reflective of the goals of self-styled communal leaders than of the reality. The transition from loose associations of Jews with a common background to formal communities was fraught with complications. Chief among these was the perennial struggle between the needs of the individual and those of the community. In Ibn Lev's home city of Salonica, communal leaders were forced to enact legislation to prevent Jews from registering with new congregations in an attempt to escape their tax burdens. In larger Jewish settlements, the problem of communal infidelity was particularly acute among the Jews of Iberian heritage. Sephardim who settled in Salonica had a variety of options, since there were several congregations in which both the language and general liturgical format were similar. In contrast, Jews of Ashkenazi, Romaniot, or Italian heritage usually had only one congregation in which they could readily feel at home.<sup>11</sup>

In the medieval Jewish world, a variety of organizational concepts of community or polity existed side by side. The overriding construct was that of Judaism itself, the community of the "children of Israel," which stood in opposition to "the nations" generally, and to Christians and Muslims more particularly. Secondarily, Jewish society was divided into separate ethnic communities or "nations" roughly based upon shared culture and region of origin. This phenomenon was by no means unique to the Jewish world. A similar process of categorization had already existed among Christian mercantile networks in the late Middle Ages.<sup>12</sup> Genoese, Flemish, and other regionally determined trading communities or "nations" created their own mercantile colonies throughout the Mediterranean. Hispano-Christian merchants and mercenaries operating throughout the Mediterranean in the late Middle Ages described themselves in similar regional and local terms. Some

were grouped by region as men of Aragon, Catalonia, Navarre, or Castile, while others presented themselves as men of Barcelona, Toledo, or Valencia.<sup>13</sup> The persistence of similar regional identities among Sephardic Jews after 1492 represents a continuation of medieval organizational categories.

As the Jewish refugees sought to reconstitute organized congregations in their new homes, they charted their own paths based on the prevailing social conditions within each group, rather than implementing the structures created by their new lords or the dictates of Jewish law. As one contemporary Jewish observer put it, groups of Jews came together to form their own, independent congregations "simply because it was their desire to do so."<sup>14</sup> This observation hints at a key factor in the evolution of Jewish social and political organization, namely that it was governed by self-interest as much, if not more, than by a devotion to legal principles. At the heart of this process was an ongoing struggle between those who sought to govern and those who sought to resist coercive authority while still benefiting from the various services provided by the *kahal*.

Wherever possible, those families that had enjoyed positions of prominence and authority in Iberia sought to reestablish their dominance as best they could, often by limiting admission to their congregations to Jews of the same cities of origin. The central issue here was gathering together people on whom they could depend to pay taxes. In places where there was not a significant mass of Jews to accomplish this goal, or where no group of families from a given Iberian city emerged as clear leaders, the boundaries of the new *kahal* could be extended to include Jews who shared broader regional associations, for example, those from Aragon or Catalonia.

The way in which rank-and-file Jews associated themselves with these new *kehalim* is less clear. The testimony of Luis de la Isla examined in the previous chapter offers a clue as to how this process may have worked. Among the first generation of exiles from Spain, informal encounters between refugees such as those described by the itinerant weaver led to the establishment of social and economic relationships that became the building blocks of new Jewish congregations. These first steps toward political organization in the Sephardic Diaspora were haphazard and extremely tenuous. As Jews and former Conversos sought out those with whom they had some sort of connection, they did not seek to reestablish communal governments that conformed to traditional models derived from Jewish law. On the contrary, the majority pursued associations that promised short-term personal benefit and required the minimum of personal commitment. Their goal was to ally themselves with patrons who could help them find work. Rabbi Moses Almosnino, one of the keenest observers of Sephardic society during this

formative period, quipped that “whoever can help others most gets the most business.”<sup>15</sup> Another chronicler noted both the initial collapse of the social order that had prevailed prior to 1492 and the speed with which the old oligarchy went about reasserting itself in their new areas of settlement:

Men arrived without their wives, and women without their husbands. They were beset by poverty and travail, want and famine and loneliness, and their cares broke their strength. And when they recalled the destruction of their homes, they became despondent. But as each one found himself alone, he sought a helpmate, and they found a way to obtain what they needed. And as they assembled, men and women courted without respect for the lineage and social standing.<sup>16</sup>

In time, our chronicler noted, the need for social hierarchy reasserted itself. The refugees overcame the initial state of social chaos that had prevailed in the first years of resettlement, and they once again began to consider matters of status and lineage in marital alliances and communal organization.

In larger centers of Sephardic life such as Salonica, Istanbul, Rome, Venice, and Fez, a critical mass of leading families from a number of different Spanish cities and regions succeeded in preserving the old microcultural associations from before 1492. The second generation of Sephardic oligarchs—what we might call Jewish creoles—were happy to draw new members from any population—Sephardic, Romaniot, Sicilian, or Mustarab—as long as they could be absorbed into the existing political framework and were willing to adopt its rule and cultural norms. In smaller Jewish settlements, the old divisions that had marked Jewish life in Iberia dissolved more rapidly. The Jewish settlement on the Venetian-controlled island of Cyprus, for instance, remained small enough that the Jews there formed a single community without creating the institutional frameworks of separate congregations, as they did in larger cities.<sup>17</sup>

As already noted with regard to Salonica, cities with larger Jewish settlements boasted a plethora of congregations, many of which retained older, pre-Expulsion cultural identities for much of the sixteenth century. In Rome, the maintenance of distinct congregations based on cultural background was already common before the arrival of the Spanish Jews. During the later Middle Ages, Jews who had migrated to Rome from northern Europe, commonly known in Italy as *ultramontani* Jews, founded their own, separate communities.<sup>18</sup> By the mid-sixteenth century, Roman Jewry had established a number of separate congregations along these sorts of cultural/regional lines, including one for the refugees from Sicily, one for the Jews of French and Provençal heritage (established around 1504), and one for the Ashkenazim (established

around 1541). Thus, the creation of separate synagogues for the Catalan-Aragonese Jews and those from Castile in the 1520s must be seen as part of a broader process of communal organization among refugee communities that is very much a product of the time.

The observations of Isaac ben Immanuel de Lattes, a Provençal rabbi who settled in Rome during the sixteenth century, illustrate the lack of communal bonds between Jewish exiles from Castile and those from Aragon and Catalonia. De Lattes notes that, upon reaching Rome, members of all three regions organized themselves into one unified synagogue community. He then adds that this situation did not last long, and that the Iberians soon divided themselves into three separate congregations based on their regions of origin (Castile, Aragon, and Catalonia), “in order to maintain the uses and customs of their forefathers, which were distinct.” It was only after the sack of Rome in 1527, an event that resulted in the destruction of several synagogues and a considerable reduction of the number of Jews in the city, that these communities began to join forces. Yet even in the wake of this great calamity, no unified Sephardic congregation emerged. Rather, the Jews of the Aragonese synagogue joined together with the Catalans, and the Castilians joined with Jews of French provenance.<sup>19</sup> Long after 1492, the Jewish exiles in Rome continued to demonstrate a strong resistance to the formation of Sephardic communities that blurred older, regional lines.<sup>20</sup>

The situation was much the same throughout the Muslim Mediterranean, in which all major cities had multiple Jewish congregations and communities.<sup>21</sup> In Ottoman Valona, a dispute arose between the recently established congregations of Catalan, Portuguese, and Castilian Jews. The Portuguese, who initially had belonged to the same congregation as the Castilian exiles, broke off and formed their own *kahal*. When members of the Castilian faction complained that this act of secession violated congregational bylaws, the Portuguese countered that they were merely establishing a second synagogue that would be open to Castilian and Portuguese alike.<sup>22</sup> Whatever the immediate outcome of this conflict, the two groups remained tied, in contrast to the Jews of Catalan descent, who succeeded in maintaining their own, separate congregation.

In Istanbul and Salonica, the various congregations functioned as separate communities. In Jerusalem, congregations retained their cultural distinctions but were united as one community. In his portrait of Jewish life in the Holy Land, the Italian kabbalist Moses Basola notes that the Jews there still distinguished between the local Jews (Mustarabim) and those Arabized Jews whose roots were in the Maghreb (Ma'arabim).<sup>23</sup> He writes that the three Jewish communities in Damascus were also divided along ethnic lines, although the specific places of origin had already begun to give way to more



general regional designations, officially designated as Sicilians, Sephardim, and Mustarabim.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Hispano-Christian travelers observed that three separate communities of Jews existed in cities such as Algiers as late as the 1580s. One description of the city distinguished among Jews of local provenance (*naturales de África*), those who arrived from Spain and Portugal after 1492, and those who came from Provence and Mallorca.<sup>25</sup> At times, the general distinction between natives and newcomers (Toshavim and Mego-rashim, respectively) also bore traces of more specific ethnic and geographical groupings. The Jews who stemmed from the city of Seville still formed their own subgroup among the Jews in Fez in 1526, distinguishing themselves from the three other congregations of Castilian provenance in that city.<sup>26</sup>

As had been the case in Italy, the tendency for Ottoman Jews to organize themselves according to older ethnic and regional divisions predated the arrival of the Sephardim. When the Turkish sultan Mehmed II transferred the various Jewries of the Balkans to his new capital at Istanbul, they reconstituted themselves into separate communities based on their cities of origin. The result was a relatively orderly process, at least from a political point of view, which allowed these émigrés to maintain the basic social structure of their communities, as they had existed prior to this *sürgün* (deportation).<sup>27</sup> Jewish communal organization in Istanbul was unique due to the Ottoman state's classification of two essentially different categories of Jews in that city: the *sürgün* communities of Romaniot Jews who immigrated as a result of the forced settlements of the mid-fifteenth century, and the *kendi gelen*, or voluntary settlers.<sup>28</sup>

### The Challenge of Jewish Self-Government

The waning importance of older cultural associations signaled the rise of a broader Sephardic identity among the descendants of the Expulsion of 1492. This new emphasis on a shared cultural legacy had a similar affect on Jewish communal organization. Over the course of the sixteenth century, the natural divisions between Jews of Castilian, Aragonese, and Catalan heritage began to fade, giving way to the formation of new communities throughout the Mediterranean. Older congregations merged or disappeared. Even in those cities where congregations retained the names of their pre-Expulsion identities, the importance of those identities diminished greatly. Individual Jews changed *'edot*, either by marriage or through other conscious decisions to associate with one group rather than another. This process of Sephardic unification, in which the second- and third-generation Jewish exiles from Spain created communal structures based on their Hispano-Jewish heritage, was a major step in the formation of Sephardic identity.



At first, most Sephardic congregations that were established in Ottoman lands maintained the older divisions among Catalan, Aragonese, Castilian, and Portuguese Jews. Over the course of the sixteenth century, however, Jews within these congregations began to form new social and political associations with one another that eroded the boundaries established by their parents' generation. This dissolution of the original boundaries of these congregations marks an important transition from the regional identities that had prevailed among the Jewries of medieval Iberia to a broader Sephardic cultural profile. However, overcoming these older communal divisions did not signal the end of communal rivalries or political instability.

Isaac Adarbi, a leading preacher and legal expert who lived in Salonica among the second generation of the Spanish exile, recorded the manner in which the seven Sephardic congregations of that city agreed to control the affiliation of new settlers. Jewish immigrants who were identified as "Portuguese" or "Castilian" would be divided equally among the seven existing congregations, regardless of their preference, and any local Jews who had recently switched affiliation would be forced to return to their original congregation. The new ordinance demonstrates the evolving role of cultural identity between the first and second generation of Sephardic refugees. For those seeking to reestablish their congregation-communities in the earliest years of the Sephardic Diaspora, language and region of origin served as the foundation for political and religious organization. As time passed, however, the primary concern of Salonica's Jewish leaders shifted from how to build functioning congregations from the ground up to how best to maintain the viability of these various congregations, and to protect the positions of those families who had emerged as the new local oligarchy. By mid-century, fiscal stability and parity among Salonica's existing congregations became the primary goals of their councillors, who, by this time, saw little difference between Castilian and Portuguese identities of the new Jewish immigrants.<sup>29</sup> In Salonica, the contract established between the two congregations of Portuguese Jews, called Lisbon and Leviat Hen, respectively, attests to the rise in importance of the latter by 1560. The pact stated that the older Lisbon congregation formally ceded rights over certain prominent individuals as well future Spanish and Portuguese settlers to the Leviat Hen congregation, which had been founded by the wealthy and influential former *Conversa* Gracia Nasi.<sup>30</sup> In some instances, therefore, the older congregations and their leadership lost ground to newer, more influential rivals. In an effort to combat such challenges, the leading Jewish families of Salonica drew up an agreement not to allow any new communities in that city for one hundred years.<sup>31</sup>

Jewish leaders throughout the Mediterranean responded to this process of communal evolution by taking steps to reorder Jewish congregations by fiat. In Jerusalem, a saddle-maker complained that communal officials had declared him to be a wheat merchant against his will, solely in order to share the financial burden of that group.<sup>32</sup> In some Ottoman cities, Sephardic Jews were reclassified, at least for purposes of communal affiliation, according to their more recent geographic associations. Those Jews who were of Aragonese descent but who had spent two generations in Italy were ordered to join the Italian congregation. Those who had only been in Italy for one generation were allowed to join the congregation associated with their native tongue.<sup>33</sup> Throughout much of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the Italian Peninsula had functioned as a temporary home for a sizable population of transient Jews, many of whom had originated in Spain. Many who arrived in Ottoman lands after having sojourned for several generations in Italy continued to claim Spanish (or Castilian, Aragonese, etc.) as their primary identity and thus sought to associate themselves with these congregations. However, the preservation of Iberian identities over the course of so many generations meant that Italian congregations in Ottoman cities such as Salonica benefited little from the Jews arriving from Italy. The enactment of new ordinances seems to have been an attempt on the part of the Italian congregation to boost its numbers. Understandable as the complaint of the Italian Jews may have been, the Jews of Aragonese descent balked at this decision. Their time in Italy had not altered their fundamental identity or their familial and social contacts.

Clearly, the relative importance of social ties and shared cultural traits to the organization of Sephardic political life differed significantly between communal leaders and the rest of the Sephardic society. In many ways, external demand for taxes acted as the principal centralizing force in the reconstruction of Jewish polities after 1492. Financial pressures became a major factor in Jewish solidarity, even if such moments remained temporary. In smaller settlements, where Jews banded together to form a unified community, they paid their taxes as a group. In larger cities, however, Jewish settlers divided up into different *kehalim* that paid separately. This arrangement made it more attractive to keep communal organizations small, and the total sums owed to the government more manageable. Nonetheless, the heaviest tax burden and the responsibility for payment fell upon those who assumed positions of political leadership. The post of communal leader became particularly onerous in moments when the *kahal* was unable to meet its financial obligation, either to the non-Jewish government or to independent creditors with whom it had loans. In such cases, the government agents or

creditors assigned the responsibility for the payment of the debt to specified individuals on the communal council, who were held as liable on behalf of the entire community.<sup>34</sup>

It is difficult to overestimate the centrality of taxation to the dilemma of Jewish self-government during this period. Whatever the natural bonds of religious solidarity among Jews, the fiscal instability of Jewish communities and the impermanent nature of Jewish settlement during the sixteenth century often pitted the Jewish political leadership against those they sought to lead. While the poor remained the most politically disenfranchised group within Jewish society, the wealthy also considered themselves to be beleaguered. After the expulsion of the Jews from the Papal States in 1569, the Jewish community of Ferrara attempted to elicit funds from some of the wealthier Jewish refugees who had recently arrived from Bologna.<sup>35</sup> Both rich and poor Jews found ways to avoid paying their taxes in full, leaving the majority of the burden on the middle class. The result was a bell-shaped curve, with the merchants and artisans shouldering the majority of the financial burden both internally, with regard to the maintenance of communal institutions, and externally, in the case of government taxes.<sup>36</sup>

The process of tax collection, which was demanding even in the best of times, was regularly aggravated by the imposition of extraordinary taxes due to shifting government demands and fluctuations in the value of money. These persistent obstacles were made all the more challenging in times of migration and demographic flux. The larger the community, the more flexibility there was in the way money could be raised, simply because there were more people to coerce.

When refugees from various Iberian towns met up with each other and with local elites in their new areas of settlement, each group eyed the other with great interest and apprehension. All parties recognized the need to form themselves into viable political entities of some sort, if for no other reason than to meet the bureaucratic demands of their host societies. Yet few were willing to submit themselves to the authority of their fellow Jews. The volatile but functional hierarchy of power that had existed before 1492 needed to be reestablished, but most Jews were extremely wary of what this process would mean for them as individuals. Abraham Saba, a member of the first generation of exiles from Spain, summed up the situation with the following observation: "People do not want anybody else to have dominion over them. Moreover, they are jealous when they see others having dominion, and their reaction is even more pronounced if the new authority is someone that used to be their equal."<sup>37</sup> Thus, in addition to the problem of trying to reinstate some semblance of order among such a mobile population, the leaders

of the early Sephardic Diaspora also had to create mechanisms for exerting control over those Jews who agreed to settle down. In most Mediterranean cities, those refugees who had retained a measure of their economic clout or connections to the seat of Muslim or Christian authority began to reassert themselves as communal leaders. In the Maghreb, documents attest to the existence of strong Jewish clans such as those of the Benzammero, Adibe, Rute, and Peres families. Members of these clans assumed posts as diplomats and translators for their new Muslim or Christian lords, and as a result were awarded positions of leadership over the local Jewish communities.<sup>38</sup>

As time passed, the key to the continued dominance of these Jews as political leaders was their ability to collect taxes and funds for the repayment of communal debts. Communal officials often complained that tax registers, which were usually based on population statistics from the previous time the community was assessed, were not accurate. Attempting to reduce their tax burden by claiming smaller populations was a tactic that was neither new nor unique to the Jewish community, but the intense mobility of Mediterranean Jewry during the sixteenth century adds a level of credibility to such claims. The more transient a community, the more problematic the process of tax assessment became. The situation was particularly difficult in Jerusalem, where the local Jewish settlement was regularly augmented by visitors and pilgrims who were not required to pay local taxes. The leaders of the city's Jewish community made formal complaints to Muslim officials that they were being unfairly assessed. The Muslim authorities responded by making unannounced visits to local synagogues in order to check attendance and gauge the size of the Jewish population.<sup>39</sup>

The inability of Jews to meet their financial responsibility to their *kahal*, and thus to the non-Jewish authorities, remained a constant concern long after the formerly destitute refugees gained a measure of economic stability in their new settlements. A common strategy used by Jewish leaders was to enlist visiting merchants in helping to defray local taxes and communal debts, as exemplified by the following responsum from Istanbul.<sup>40</sup>

The Córdoba congregation agreed under penalty of ban that no member of the congregation (may God protect them) nor anyone else shall be allowed to play cards in his home, except upon certain specified days.<sup>41</sup> This arrangement was instituted for a period of ten years. Some time after this agreement was written and signed by the aforementioned congregants, a Jewish traveller came to town. This man was bound for the East, for Alexandria, or some such place, and was waiting for a ship to in order to continue on his way. . . . One day, this man was observed playing cards

in his residence and several members of the congregation complained that he had violated their ordinance. . . . And there are those who support this charge, claiming that having worshipped in the synagogue for thirty days, he is subject to all agreements and regulations of their congregation, and that his assertion [that he is only a visitor] is rejected.<sup>42</sup>

In a similar case, a Moroccan rabbi who had come to Jerusalem on pilgrimage complained that he was subsequently forced to share in the payment of the community's debts.<sup>43</sup> The political and fiscal viability of an individual *kahal* thus depended upon the ability of its officials to maintain something like a dual set of accounts for external and internal use. On the one hand, they would often attempt to underreport the number of taxpayers in their community to the government in order to reduce the total amount for which they, as communal representatives, would be liable. On the other hand, they would simultaneously seek to broaden their reach with regard to both regular taxes and voluntary contributions to include any visitors who might make use of the services of their community. Those who could not be co-opted were, eventually, barred from communal affiliation. Thus, at the close of the sixteenth century, the Sephardim of Pisa attempted to exclude from their community any merchants who joined them temporarily and then moved on. The communal leaders promulgated ordinances aimed at limiting membership to those who came together with their families with the intent to settle permanently in the city, and thus make a commitment to the local community.<sup>44</sup>

The desire to avoid burdensome taxes was a common reason for the continued migration of Jews around the Mediterranean. The instability caused by this migration was felt by Jewish families as well as by Jewish communities. A letter found in the Cairo *genizah* collection contains an ardent appeal to a man who had decided to abandon his home and family due to his inability to meet his tax allotment. The letter's author employs a mix of threats, guilt, and heartfelt pleas from the whole family for the rapid return of its *pater familias*. Should he persist in his actions, the writer warns:

You will provoke a quarrel between your son-in-law and your daughter, who is pregnant, and she will become upset and perchance suffer a miscarriage. You will also destroy the good fortune of Rachel, who has become a mature young lady, beautiful, good natured and modest. Everyone will say: "Look at this man who is a decent and elderly scribe, who has abandoned his wife and daughters, and has been absent for a number of years! Perhaps he has become deranged, for he has gone to a distant country."<sup>45</sup>

Long absences from hearth and home were common among the itinerant Jews of the Sephardic Diaspora and hardly constituted madness, as suggested here. However, a man who abandoned his family without adequate support was indeed seen as exceedingly callous. While such an appeal as this might well have been written in any period, the abandonment of familial support would have been particularly acute in the sixteenth century, when the strains on Jewish communities made them unable to meet even the most basic needs of many of their members.

Flight was only one means of resistance to the fiscal demands of the *kahal*. In cases of repaying debts to creditors, some members of the Jewish community attempted to exempt themselves from sharing in communal debt by arguing that their names did not appear on the loan contract. On such occasions, the representatives who had accepted responsibility for the debt on behalf of the entire community petitioned the Muslim court to force these recalcitrant members to pay their share. At other times, individuals complained that these same communal leaders were guilty of forcing members to pay more than their allotment.<sup>46</sup> Jewish leaders admitted that they regularly listed other Jews as debtors when they took loans on behalf of the community without the consent or even the knowledge of these Jews.<sup>47</sup>

If the average Jew saw himself as the victim of rapacious communal officials, the latter fretted over congregants who sought to evade their civic responsibility. In some cases, the problem was not only an unwillingness to pay their share of the community's financial obligation, but an inability as well. Poverty was commonplace in the early Sephardic Diaspora, and financial fortunes could turn in an instant. Compounding the problem was the tendency of many Jews to spend beyond their means in an effort to maintain the appearance of wealth, and to preserve their social status. Despite financial losses caused by expulsion and mounting tax pressures in their new lands of settlement, many Jews still felt the need to spend lavishly on banquets, often falling deeply into debt in order to do so.<sup>48</sup> As one rabbi remarked:

We have noted that people, hard-pressed and lacking in influence as they are, feel obligated to make extravagant expenditures for festive banquets—whether they are poor or rich—and they borrow on interest in order to limit the immediate outlay, because they see others who preen themselves and spend without limit; and the result has been that even those who are pressed for a livelihood suffer losses and make extravagant expenditures in order to appear equal to those who are wealthy.<sup>49</sup>

Brief observations such as this stand as stark reminders that many of the struggles of Jewish life in this period played out on a modest, personal level. For the student of Jewish history, the allure of cataclysmic events—of expulsions and mass conversions, censorship and ghettoization—is undeniable. Yet to focus on these grander themes to the exclusion of the responses they provoked from the individual Jews is to overlook essential components of this story. Far from being mundane, these details of daily life allow for a more intricate portrait of Mediterranean history. The tendency of the Sephardic exiles to place personal status before fiscal stability, even at times of great economic and political uncertainty, render them as humans in the fullest sense.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

The standard narrative of the early Sephardic Diaspora maintains that a wave of Hispano-Jewish immigrants flooded the Jewish communities of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean, often overwhelming and fundamentally altering the local Jewish societies in which they came to settle. Viewed from a distance, this general characterization of the rise of a pan-Mediterranean Sephardic society holds true. But there were additional factors at play here that should not be overlooked. For all the cultural impact of these Sephardic Jews on their new areas of settlement, they remained fundamentally divided among themselves for much of the sixteenth century. Even as a new Sephardic identity began to take shape during this period, communal organization within this larger Diaspora was determined by more localized associations. Initially, the bonds of shared languages and common cities of origin aided in comforting the dispersed by allowing them to organize together with those families they knew best, and who shared these important cultural traits. These families that had a greater level of comfort with one another also aided in fostering bonds of trust necessary for communal governance, particularly regarding the question of fiscal stability. During the second and third generation of the Sephardic Diaspora, these limited social ties and the widespread reluctance toward communal organization grew into significant obstacles to the development of Jewish political structures. But the limits of Jewish self-government were, in many ways, offset by other forms of organization. As local *kehillot* struggled to meet the needs of their members, the latter turned to the informal networks of families, merchants, and scholars that bound Jews together in a parallel communal system.

## Families, Networks, and the Challenge of Social Organization

Trust yourself neither to your own brother nor to your best friend

—Elijah da Pesaro

The independent congregation-community was not the only way in which Mediterranean Jews organized themselves during this period. As the refugees of 1492 set about reestablishing these local political associations, they also began to form broader interregional links with one another. These horizontal associations, or networks, represent an important dimension of the early Sephardic Diaspora that served to complement that of the congregational community. Much like the local Jewish community, the expansion of these social and economic networks marks a point of continuity with the period before 1492. Wide-ranging networks of Jewish merchants and intellectuals had been central features of Jewish society throughout the medieval period. In his influential portrait of medieval Jewish life, S. D. Goitein famously emphasizes the fluidity of Jewish social and economic contacts across the broad expanse of the Mediterranean. Although the disintegration of the Pax Islamica during the later Middle Ages caused a sharp decline in Jewish long-distance trade, the Mediterranean society depicted by Goitein never truly disappeared. The circulation of large groups of European Jewish



refugees around the Mediterranean during the fifteenth and sixteenth century thus marks something of a revival of the model of Jewish society that had predominated in the region from the tenth to the twelfth centuries.

Indeed, Sephardic mercantile networks of the sixteenth century represent a link between the interregional contacts of Mediterranean Jewry during the late Middle Ages and the worldwide networks of Sephardic merchants of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Yet, while the network model is a useful and important way to view the Sephardic Diaspora, the two should not be seen as synonymous. To do so would merely shift the essentialist definition of community from one that encompasses all Jews to one that includes all Sephardim.<sup>2</sup> In reality, many Sephardim remained on the margins of these new mercantile systems. Moreover, those who were integrated into these networks were bound together by shared circumstances as much as by a common religious ideology or cultural background. The commitment of early modern Jewish and Converso merchants to an international Sephardic community was grounded in a common heritage, but also dependent upon mutual economic benefit. Whenever they encountered better options for religious, communal, or political associations, they did not hesitate to take them. Furthermore, the shared trauma of exile and the many obstacles faced by the refugees helped bring Sephardic merchants together, but never fully obliterated the competition and tensions among leading families and factions. Old rivalries and alliances persisted and new ones were formed as the wealthy and well connected among the refugees encountered a host of new political and economic opportunities.

### Diaspora Families

The family, more than any other type of social organization, continued to form the most important building block of community, trust, and economic security in the early Sephardic Diaspora. Indeed, the less able the *kahal* was to provide safety and stability to its members, the more important ties of kinship became. One area in which the role of the Jewish family superseded that of the *kahal* was in the pursuit of legal redress for family members who had been killed by non-Jews. In the Ottoman Empire, government officials would often decline to apprehend criminals suspected of murdering Jews, even when the identity of the murderers was common knowledge, unless there was a relative ready to bring formal charges against them. In such cases, it was argued that only the relative to whom the blood money was owed could legally prosecute the case. The importance of family over community among the Sephardim is also reflected in a letter from a widow living in Jerusalem to

her brothers in Egypt, requesting financial help and advice, and complaining that she had no one in Jerusalem on whom she could depend for support.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, women were integrated into the mercantile networks of the sixteenth century as both producers and purveyors of goods, but were not as mobile as their male counterparts. Sephardic women were involved in a variety of economic activities, from money-lending and real estate sales to the manufacture and sale of textiles, perfumes, jewelry, and other commodities. Jewish women even acted as the agents of Muslim craftswomen, selling their goods in the public market while the latter remained sequestered at home.<sup>4</sup> When it came to long-distance trade, however, they generally remained dependent upon the activity of their male relatives.<sup>5</sup>

At times, Sephardic families could prove to be as problematic a support system as the local Jewish *kahal*, especially in matters involving money. An inquisitorial register from Lisbon records the case of a Converso family that was torn apart over the matter of a large inheritance. João Baptista, a Converso merchant operating in Italy, had been found guilty of Judaizing and only released from prison upon confession of his sins to the Inquisition. Once a Converso merchant had been imprisoned or even interrogated for suspicion of Judaizing, his position within his trading network became jeopardized. Though he was still considered a member of his family and its important mercantile system, João's relatives now feared that his arrest by the Holy Office had attracted too much unwanted attention. Their solution to this thorny problem, all too common among Converso families, was to send him first to Angola and then Brazil, the furthest points of their far-flung trading network. However, João did not take his banishment with equanimity. Upon the death of his uncle, Jorge Carlos, in the Portuguese colony of São Tomé, João saw his opportunity for a reversal of fortune that would return him to prominence as a merchant. Using his compromised position with the Inquisition to his advantage, he denounced his relatives to the local bishop in order to inherit the whole of his uncle's vast estate.<sup>6</sup>

As we have seen, tensions existed throughout the sixteenth century between Sephardic Jews and their communal leaders. Yet even the most independent-minded among these Jews regularly found themselves in need of the sort of political guidance and regulation provided by their communal authorities. One area in which the needs of both the Jewish masses and their leadership regularly overlapped was in the process of arranging social alliances through betrothal and marriage. In many cases, the families involved contracted third parties to act as arbiters to set the conditions for the engagement, the wedding, and the dowry. Communal councillors often sought to involve themselves directly in this process, but families frequently turned to arbiters who were

not aligned with the formal communal government structure, and in whom they had more trust. Such functionaries were particularly helpful when the proposed marriage was between a bride and groom who lived in different cities, a phenomenon that was not uncommon among the roving Sephardim.<sup>7</sup> In one example of such wide-ranging contacts across the Mediterranean, former Conversos who returned to Judaism in Ferrara during the 1560s petitioned the rabbis of Fez for help in handling the case of a young woman whose fiancé had returned to Spain and married a Christian girl there.<sup>8</sup> These difficult situations caused some Sephardim to favor the bonds of family—and the important protections and support they provided—over those of religion. Moses Alashkar, who left Spain in 1492 and became one of the leading rabbinic decisors of the sixteenth century, voiced regret that his tough position on a matter of betrothal prevented a certain Jewish woman from remarrying, and, as a result, she converted in order to marry legally.<sup>9</sup>

Problems of this sort, in which engagements and even marriages were torn apart by the geographic and religious mobility of the Sephardim, regularly left personal and communal finances in disarray. Jewish communal councils often focused their legislative efforts on the supervision of betrothals and marriages, both as a means of stabilizing their communal tax base, and also in an effort to exercise influence over the Jews in their respective congregations. The Spanish Jews who settled in Fez and Salonica drew on older customs to establish new communal ordinances aimed at bringing greater standardization to marriages. One such custom that the Sephardic refugees attempted to reestablish in their new homes was the requirement that betrothals be made in public and adhere to an official set of rules.<sup>10</sup> The ordinances promulgated in both cities also demanded that betrothals were to be made in Hebrew, rather than in vernacular languages, in an attempt to force the involvement of learned Jews in this process.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, they required all betrothals to be made in the presence of at least ten witnesses, one of whom was required to be an acknowledged rabbinic authority. By mid-century, Jewish communal leaders in Italy also attempted to regulate betrothals in a similar manner. In Ferrara, those Jews who did not follow the prescribed format as dictated in the new ordinances set down in 1554 were subject to excommunication from the community.<sup>12</sup>

Alashkar represents an example of how the itinerant Jewish scholars of the age brought their expertise to bear on matters such as marriage. In addition to establishing himself as a judge and legal authority in Egypt and Jerusalem, Alashkar also kept in regular communication with a network of colleagues throughout the eastern Mediterranean, Italy, and North Africa. When his contacts in Salonica apprised him of the new ordinances regarding betrothal, the

sage wrote back and emphasized the importance of including legal scholars in this process of communal control over marriage alliances. Alashkar approved of the *kahal's* efforts to regulate betrothals, but added that the absence of knowledgeable scholars at such ceremonies "would lead to chaos."<sup>13</sup>

Despite such efforts, many Jews continued to arrange betrothals as they saw fit, often without the consent or recognition of their community's rabbinic representatives.<sup>14</sup> A legal query written by the Jews of Candia, on the island of Crete, offers a glimpse at the potential chaos that so concerned Alashkar. It records an incident that took place at a card game during one of the final nights of Passover, when a Jewish girl entered the room where a group of Jewish men were playing cards. The girl playfully snatched a small coin from the game. In response, one of the men joked that she had done this in an effort to become betrothed, since a gift of a small amount of money often functioned as a token of intent to marry. In this case, the act was met with good-natured laughter until one of the men present stood up and proclaimed that he did, indeed, betroth her. Not to be outdone, the girl upped the ante and replied that she would agree to marry the man if he offered her two more coins. At this point, the man's brother chastised both of them for dealing lightly with such a serious matter and forced the girl to return the coin.<sup>15</sup> This vignette describes precisely the sort of social turmoil and confusion that rabbis and communal officials sought to avoid by bringing about greater control over the formation of Jewish marriage alliances.

Supervision of the betrothal process remained a point of contention among Mediterranean Jews well into the seventeenth century. The problem is one that illustrates the disparity between Jewish ideals as expressed by rabbinic and lay leaders, and the daily practices of average Jews. Long after Jewish governments succeeded in reconstituting themselves in the wake of the great expulsions and migrations of the sixteenth century, regulation of this basic element of social organization generally remained beyond their reach. It was still common for young Jewish men and women to meet and interact with relatively little supervision from their families, let alone their communal leaders.<sup>16</sup> Once again, the case of Luis de la Isla, discussed in chapter 3, provides an example of this sort of activity. While in Alexandria, both Jews and Christians vied for the allegiance of the young wayfarer, but neither could compete with the two love-struck women who succeeded in absorbing Luis's attention.

Generally speaking, sixteenth-century rabbis were not indifferent to the plight of their fellow Jews. Those Spanish and Portuguese scholars who had themselves suffered the vicissitudes of exile were particularly sensitive to many problems that filled the lives of their coreligionists. However, these rabbis were also dedicated to the preservation of the sanctity of Jewish law,

and their deliberations reflect their efforts to address popular needs while upholding Jewish custom and tradition. In contrast, the vast majority of Sephardic Jews attempting to navigate the various obstacles of life after expulsion were far less concerned with legal nuance. Not only was the average Jew disinterested in legal debates, the uncertainty of how scholars might rule in any given case made him hesitant to reveal too much information about his own circumstances. Casual conversations about one's religious and marital status might spark the interest of legal Jewish authorities, who then involved themselves in the lives of Jewish migrants, often causing serious legal predicaments.<sup>17</sup> And just as Jews had reason to fear scholars who might be capricious or unfeeling, rabbis often demonstrated a similar mistrust for the motivations of the average Jew. In a discussion regarding the permissibility of a woman to remarry without sufficient testimony of her husband's death, one rabbi argued that there was little choice but to allow the practice: "since women are fickle, and they will use every available ploy to remarry, even moving to a place where they are unknown. And since they are liable to consider themselves single rather than married, they may become promiscuous, causing havoc and destruction. Even if we forbid them to marry, they will ridicule our decision."<sup>18</sup>

The quest to regulate key aspects of family life such as betrothal, divorce, and inheritance illustrates the way in which the diverse elements of Sephardic society played off one another. Communal officers hoping to bring order to their new and shifting communities, rabbinic authorities seeking to maintain their effectiveness in upholding Jewish legal tradition as well as their personal relevance, and average Jews in search of greater stability and personal benefit in their own lives were all brought together over these fundamental questions of daily life.

### Merchant and Rabbinic Networks

In his petition for the formal readmission of the Jews to England, the rabbi and former Converso Menasseh ben Israel (d. 1657) offered a description of the sorts of cultural bonds that allowed Jewish and New Christian merchants to transcend the official boundaries of religious community and form mutually beneficial trade networks. Writing from Amsterdam, Ben Israel extolled the unique position of the Sephardic merchants settled in Holland, Italy, and the Ottoman Empire:

So easily they credit one another; and by that means they draw the Negotiation wherever they are . . . especially holding correspondence with their

friends and kinds-folk, whose language they understand; they do abundantly enrich the Lands and Countries of Strangers where they live, not only with what is requisite and necessary for the life of man; but also what may serve for ornament to his civil condition. . . . This reason is the more strengthened, when we see, the Jewish Nation dwelling in Holland and Italy traffics with their own stock, but also with the riches of many others of their own Nation, friends, kinds-men and acquaintance, which notwithstanding live in Spain, and send unto them their moneys and goods.<sup>19</sup>

Here, Ben Israel's careful wording portrays the Sephardim as a singular trading nation that encompasses different religious categories (Jews and Christians), and in which the bonds of family, friendship, and language form the basis for trust, credit, and exchange. Although the self-identity of the Sephardim as members of a shared Hispano-Portuguese "nation" did not fully emerge until Ben Israel's own day, the willingness of the Jews of Iberian heritage to trade with Conversos still living in Portugal, and of the latter to provide the Jews credit in exchange for access to African and Ottoman markets, had already become notable features of Sephardic mercantile activity in the first generations of the exile. Throughout the sixteenth century, the close bonds of the Sephardic trading networks were reinforced by a shared vulnerability. In this regard, the formation of the Sephardic Diaspora can also be seen as part of a wider phenomenon of European Diaspora communities that began to take shape during the late medieval and early modern period. Sephardic trading networks mirrored those of Genoese, Catalan, and Flemish Christians that had already been established throughout the Mediterranean, as well as newer ethnically and geographically constructed mercantile networks that began to stretch into the New World and Asia. Among these early modern Diasporas that derived their identity from a blend of religious, ethnic, and mercantile bonds were those of the Basques, the Huguenots, and the Quakers.<sup>20</sup>

The foundation for the worldwide trading networks of Sephardic Jews was first established in the overlapping routes of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean.<sup>21</sup> In the Maghreb, those Jews who survived the first tumultuous years after 1492 succeeded in establishing themselves within the region's extensive mercantile system. Jewish merchants in the interior trading entrepôts of Fez and Marrakech forged links to others in Mediterranean ports, such as Oran, as well as to Safi on the Atlantic coast. Descendants of these Hispano-Jewish immigrants, who were still referred to as Megorashim (exiles) for generations, connected to the old overland routes that linked the cities of the northern Maghreb to the sub-Saharan center at Timbuktu. They also maintained important links to developing markets in Portugal and the new Portuguese

territories stretching southward along Africa's Atlantic coast via their connections to Conversos and former Conversos operating in these areas.<sup>22</sup>

These trade networks connecting Conversos still in Iberia with the Sephardim of North Africa also bound them to the Jewish merchants operating in Italy and, by the last decades of the century, to Conversos who had come to settle in London, Bordeaux, and the Netherlands.<sup>23</sup> By the close of the sixteenth century, the mercantile reach of the Sephardic Diaspora stretched around the world, bringing a variety of goods back to the Mediterranean, as well as to northern Europe. The English, who at the time remained marginalized from these global networks, viewed this development with increasing trepidation. Concern over the degree to which Sephardic trading networks had begun to penetrate northern European markets and society was reflected in (and no doubt enhanced by) several of the English plays of the period, including Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1590), William Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (c. 1596), and Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London* (c. 1581) and its sequel, *Three Lords and Three Ladies* (1590). Another contemporary work, William Haughton's *Englishmen for My Money: or, A Woman Will Have Her Will* (c. 1598), echoed the popular recognition that these mercantile networks were built upon religious, ethnic, and familial bonds. In the latter play, the character of the Portuguese merchant-usurer, Pisaro, represents a Sephardic Diaspora in miniature as he seeks to establish a European-wide family network by marrying his three daughters to a Frenchman, a Dutchman, and an Italian, respectively.

Sephardic merchants also became active in the so-called Levant trade that linked together the Christian and Muslim lands of the eastern Mediterranean, and that was dominated by Venice for much of the sixteenth century.<sup>24</sup> The ability of the second generation of Jewish exiles to establish themselves as major players in the Levant Trade should not be underestimated. The continued popularity of Italian cities such as Venice, Ferrara, and, later, Livorno as destinations for Sephardic merchants underscores the fact that the promise of profit was a major force in directing settlement patterns among the Sephardim.<sup>25</sup> And while Muslim cities did provide an important religious haven for displaced Jews and escaping Conversos, these settlers also celebrated the general freedom of movement and trade that characterized Jewish life in Ottoman lands.<sup>26</sup>

In his description of Safed and its environs, Moses Basola emphasizes the prevailing economic conditions there, both as a reason for Jewish settlement and as a potential deterrent:

Generally speaking, there is much more trade in this land than in Italy, for the Muslims purchase more willingly from the Jews than from others.



But he who has no capital to invest in trade must be a craftsman. . . . One cannot expect to hire himself out as a teacher or as a house servant or shop assistant. Nor can one live at public expense, for the poor are many. Therefore, he who possesses neither craft nor funds should not leave Italy, lest he regret his actions and return, and a word to the wise is sufficient.<sup>27</sup>

Basola's assessment of the situation in the Ottoman Levant offers an important caveat to the popular tendency to view the region primarily as a sanctuary for the free expression of Judaism. Whatever personal reasons migrants may have had for coming to the region, those who lacked sufficient means for economic success were counseled to stay home.

The expansion of Sephardic trading networks after 1492 provided an important model of social organization that paralleled that of the local, autonomous Jewish community and was, in many ways, better suited to respond to the needs of such a mobile society.<sup>28</sup> And, like the local Jewish communities, the interregional mercantile networks were not always as cohesive as they seem to modern scholars.

In 1563, the Jewish merchant Elijah da Pesaro wrote to his brother offering him advice about plying the trade routes between Venice and the Ottoman ports of the Levant. What emerges from his account is a portrait of Jewish merchant life that stands in stark contrast to the image of Jewish trade networks depicted by Menasseh ben Israel and discussed regularly in modern studies. His admonition to his brother does not so much contradict the importance of Jewish trading networks as it does highlight other dimensions of Jewish life within these networks. Here, the Jewish merchant appears as a relatively independent and vulnerable figure, rather than a protected or privileged member of a transnational religious or ethnic network. Whatever the social benefits of belonging to a network community may have been, da Pesaro emphasizes that the merchant ultimately stands alone within a highly competitive and often hostile world.

In his letter, da Pesaro carefully lists the various pitfalls awaiting travelers of his day, but makes little mention of overt anti-Jewish attitudes. He begins by offering instructions on how best to navigate the various obstacles that stand before the merchant as he sets out on his trip:

Now my brother if you wish to journey comfortably through Venice, open your ears and pay attention to the following advice. . . . In Venice, depend on no one. Trust yourself neither to your own brother nor to your best friend, for if you do you will find yourself in trouble without knowing how you came there.<sup>29</sup>



In these opening lines, da Pesaro, the merchant, offers a much closer and less idealized view of Jewish mercantile life than Ben Israel, the communal advocate. The shared bond of Sephardic identity and the special solidarity of Ben Israel's trading nation are absent here. In their place, da Pesaro presents us with a world in which all such ties, even those of kinship, are mere mirages in which the savvy merchant will place little confidence. He goes on to note that, as the time for the ship's departure draws near, the various preparations for the voyage will throw the city into a frenzy of activity and confusion. It is at this time, he warns, that "one is open to the attention of professional swindlers who can do you much harm. I know this from experience and have seen it with my own eyes. Be careful, pay attention to your property, be firm and prudent and on the lookout for snags and pitfalls." At the customs house, da Pesaro notes:

Generally speaking you will find yourself having to pay ten percent more than you had supposed. After this, you will ask the customs agent to send an examining officer to inspect your packages and to see that the information on the Bill of Lading is correct. A small cash gift to this man will facilitate the inspection.

Da Pesaro was writing during the height of the Catholic backlash against the Jews in Italy, fueled by the onset of the Counter-Reformation. Yet, he does not warn his brother of the dangers of religious hatred or the potential for anti-Jewish violence. Clearly, da Pesaro was well aware of the mounting religious and social restrictions against the Jews throughout Italy, and the popular anti-Jewish sentiment that they helped to feed. Nonetheless, his position is not that of a Jew trying to make his way in a world of hostile Christians, but of a merchant surrounded by men of greed and general immorality. He writes: "All the crew of the ship are after money, they are without faith, and full of schemes and tricks; no man can trust them." Indeed, religious affiliation matters little compared to profession, social position and the practical benefits that these may afford the traveler. Da Pesaro counsels his brother:

Make sure to get on good terms with the ship's cook. Promise him some money if he leaves you a small space on his stove, and if he will prevent other passengers from pushing you aside. Be very tactful with him to avoid any possible dispute, and keep back some part of the money until the last day of the voyage.

This small window onto the world of Jewish merchant life suggests that, while networks may indeed have been organic manifestations of cultural

solidarity, they were also something of a necessity in order to survive a generally hostile environment. The primary source of this hostility was not religious in nature, but stemmed from a broader set of circumstances that challenged all peoples of the early modern Mediterranean. This is not to say Jewish merchants were unaware of anti-Jewish animus among their fellow travelers. In his own letter of advice to Jews traveling the eastern Mediterranean, Moses Basola noted that it was common for Jews onboard a given ship to take up a collection to bribe the deck officer to ensure their protection from those who were "ill-disposed" toward Jews. Yet like da Pesaro, Basola focuses his attention on ways to avoid more universal problems. His suggestion to pay off the deck officer is part of a broader list of recommended payments to people such as the cook and the water captain (to ensure cooking space and fresh water) and other prudent tips (book a space in the hold for your goods early, and directly from the captain).<sup>30</sup>

As the great rabbis of Spain and Portugal spread throughout North Africa, Italy, and the Ottoman Empire, they created their own networks that operated much like those of Jewish merchants. Indeed, Jewish scholarly networks mirrored those of their mercantile counterparts in more than just the free exchange of commodities, in this case, knowledge. The important yet amorphous role of rabbinic authorities within Jewish society also made them vulnerable to competition from other scholars, and dependent upon the support of colleagues from other regions. The loosely formed networks of Jewish scholars were thus built upon horizontal ties between rabbis across the Mediterranean as well as important vertical ties with other Jews in their home cities. In many ways, these horizontal and vertical ties functioned reciprocally. Scholars were rendered influential, or at least useful, to their colleagues in other cities due to the status they enjoyed in their own community. Conversely, the legal opinions of rabbis without status or influence in their home cities were of little use to their colleagues in other locales in much the same way that merchants without access to local goods or markets formed ineffective links within their trading networks. The fame that allowed rabbis to play a role in local Jewish government afforded them the ability to buttress or challenge the positions of various factions within the *kahal*. Rabbinic status and reputation were of particular importance since rabbis held no official political position within Jewish society. Their influence on Jewish government rested on being recognized as arbiters of Jewish tradition, but this role often placed them in competition with one another for the recognition and patronage of Jewish governing councils. The status and political authority of these rabbis was therefore equally dependent upon the ability of each

individual scholar to convince his local governing council that his command of tradition was greater than that of his colleagues.

As with Jewish mercantile networks and local Jewish political structures, solidarity within rabbinic networks was built upon bonds of trust that developed among small groups of individuals. Much like their merchant counterparts, members of rabbinic dynasties also sought to preserve important bonds that they had developed with one another by marrying within their own ranks.<sup>31</sup> In addition to these sorts of marital alliances, the schools and intellectual circles in which a scholar was educated helped to develop social bonds that he would maintain throughout his adult career. Former students would often come to the defense of their master when the latter's honor or opinion came under attack from a rival.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the bonds between students and teachers, those between friends and colleagues who formed part of the same intellectual circles also persisted long after those circles dissolved. This is particularly significant for the relationships among sixteenth-century Sephardic scholars whose friendship patterns were often extensions of intellectual and personal relationships established prior to 1492.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Sephardic rabbis continued to show a keen awareness of and pride in their scholarly genealogies, traits that had become prevalent throughout medieval Jewish society.<sup>34</sup> By linking themselves to a venerable chain of scholarly tradition, Sephardic rabbis simultaneously burnished their own scholarly pedigrees, a practice that became particularly important as they sought to establish their authority in new areas of settlement. When the Castilian exile Moses Alashkar declared, "My traits are the traits of my teachers, the rabbis of Spain, giants of the world," he was offering more than a statement of cultural pride.<sup>35</sup>

### Rivalry, Factionalism, and the Limits of Networks

The somewhat darker side of the informal networks that linked rabbis across the Mediterranean was an intense competition for jobs, as well as for social and political influence. The Sephardic migrations of the sixteenth century shaped the development of scholarly networks, as they did all aspects of Mediterranean Jewish society. The sheer numbers of migrant scholars flooded the market for legal experts and teachers. As local Jewish governments struggled to reestablish themselves in their new areas of settlement, those seeking to act as teachers and officially recognized authorities in Jewish law (*marbitzei Torah*) were left to compete for a small number of privileged posts. As a result, Jewish scholars were as nomadic as the other Jews of the age, and even the most accomplished rabbis were forced to wander from city to city.<sup>36</sup> Rabbi Gedaliah ibn Yahya, who stemmed from one of the oldest and

most powerful families in Portugal, fled to Italy prior to 1497 and spent most of his life as an itinerant rabbi. During the turbulent sixteenth century, rabbis took jobs where they could find them, a fact that led many Sephardic scholars to assume posts as judges and spiritual leaders of non-Sephardic congregations. Over the course of the sixteenth century, such situations would become increasingly common throughout the Mediterranean Jewish world. In taking jobs as teachers and judges with various non-Sephardic congregations, these scholars aided in the dissemination of Hispano-Jewish legal traditions and religious rites in the eastern Mediterranean. Those who could not attain positions as teachers or communal preachers ended up composing sermons for more established rabbis. Such was the case of one of the most prolific sermon-writers of the early sixteenth century, Joseph Garçon. Born in Castile prior to the Expulsion, Garçon wandered from Portugal to Salonica and Damascus, working as a traveling preacher and scribe.<sup>37</sup>

Early modern rabbis generally saw themselves as religious authorities to all Jews, and not merely to those who shared their ethnic background. However, communal councils often balked at the idea of scholars from other ethnic groups associating themselves with their congregation. Those rabbis without a firm relationship to a particular congregation were not always welcome to preach or offer spiritual guidance. In Salonica, quarrels broke out over rabbis attempting to preach at congregations other than their own, prompting communal officials to prohibit the practice.<sup>38</sup> In other cities, these conflicts spread to the paracommunal Torah societies that, much like the congregations, were built upon ethnic and regional identities. In Rome, the Torah societies associated with the Jews of the Castilian and Catalan congregations clashed over the right to give sermons on the holiday of Shavuot. The conflict, which raged for months during 1520–21, flared up again in 1539, this time between the amalgamated Castilian-French congregation and that of the Catalan-Aragonese.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to fears of encroachment upon their jurisdiction, some leading scholars of the period voiced their displeasure at the general obtrusiveness of other scholars. Rabbinic competition for communal posts, and the attendant honor and authority that came with the recognition of their authority in Jewish law, led many scholars to be over-involved in political matters and, in the eyes of some Jews, overbearing as well. The great Romaniot sage Elijah Mizrahi (d. 1525) railed against the arrogance of some of his fellow scholars for speaking when they should listen:

For they are none other than students who did not spend enough time serving [their rabbis] and wish to aggrandize themselves before the

ignorant and before the residents of the city. They jump at every opportunity and are the first to judge and rule on issues of Jewish law. And it is they who create altercations and conflict among the Jewish people, and destroy the world and extinguish the light of Torah and trample the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts.<sup>40</sup>

Rabbi Meir Katzenellenbogen (d. 1565), an Ashkenazi scholar who had come to reside in Padua, echoed these sentiments in an open letter to Rabbi Moses Alashkar, a Sephardic sage then living in Jerusalem. His rebuke of Alashkar's intercession in a matter in Candia, Crete, illustrates the broad reach of local conflicts, as well as the generally toxic atmosphere they produced:

You are fortunate to be in Jerusalem while your net is spread out in Candia. You attempt to decide between two lions who have been battling for a long time. I refused to involve myself and did not try to decide between them even though they beseeched me to do so in many letters. I became aware that this was not a controversy for the sake of heaven, and that only jealousy and contentiousness had brought them to this stage. I decided that were I to write to them declaring my opinion, I would inevitably have to agree with one of them. He would then raise his hand over the other and proclaim, "I have won," and hatred between them would only increase. I say, let them resolve the matter by themselves.<sup>41</sup>

The scarcity of teaching and advisory posts was exacerbated by a general disinterest in advanced studies among most Jews. The average Jewish merchant or artisan was not particularly inclined to study, and outside of a handful of centers it was not easy to find a critical mass of paying students. Even a city as large as Damascus, in which contemporary accounts estimate that there were some five hundred households by the mid-sixteenth century, did not have any *yeshivot*. In such situations, academic instruction was often reduced to the cursory reading of sections of Maimonides' legal code after morning prayers.<sup>42</sup> It was only in the seventeenth century, after the quantity of rabbinic scholars had adjusted to the general demand for such posts, that the local *marbitz Torah* came to assume a greater role in the direction of communal affairs.<sup>43</sup> The seventeenth century also marked a shift in the patronage of these *yeshivot*, at least in the Ottoman Empire. Throughout most of the sixteenth century, these academies were closely associated with individual communities, which typically acted as their sponsors and for which the schools were named. This situation began to deteriorate by the close of the sixteenth century as the various congregations, beset by financial woes, were unable to fund the *yeshivot*.

As a result, rabbinic sages and their students became increasingly dependent upon the patronage of wealthy individuals rather than the local community. This arrangement created a means for wealthier Jews to gain status and honor through the public recognition of their financial support of religious institutions, but it also allowed them to play a new and often intrusive role in the internal management of these schools.<sup>44</sup>

Rabbis who succeeded in establishing themselves within the religious and political framework of a particular congregation were confronted by yet another set of rivals: the mercantile elite who managed Jewish communal affairs. While these scholars did continue to form an integral part of Jewish self-government as learned advisors to the communal councils, the nature of this relationship was plagued by ambiguity. Sephardic Jews remained committed to the preservation of Judaism's legal and moral traditions and viewed the role of the rabbi as essential to this process. Yet, the precise way in which rabbis were to be integrated into communal government, as well as the mechanism for deciding which scholars would perform this role, was no clearer in the sixteenth century than it had been prior to 1492.<sup>45</sup>

One way in which scholars succeeded in inserting themselves into the governing structure of the local community was through their involvement in the various communal agencies (*ve'adim*) established to promote pious behavior. In medieval Iberia, committees of this sort were generally dominated by laymen. In the sixteenth century, however, the Ottoman version of these institutions seems to have been heavily populated by scholars.<sup>46</sup> Elsewhere, rabbis sought a more permanent role in Jewish government and were quick to criticize communal councils when the latter attempted to promulgate ordinances without their approval.<sup>47</sup> In so doing, these scholars were arguing for the implementation of a longstanding ideal of Jewish government that blended a council of communal representatives with the guidance of those learned in Jewish law. In some cases, sixteenth-century rabbis sought to bring greater clarity to this basic model of cooperative governance and called for a more formal definition of the relationship between the *kahal* and its rabbinic advisors. Rabbi Levi ben Jacob ibn Habib (d. 1545), a Castilian-born scholar who became a leading authority in Jerusalem and Salonica, argued that once a community recognized the leadership of a rabbi, it could not pass a decree without his consent.<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, such pronouncements were notoriously difficult to enforce. The degree to which a given rabbi was involved in the governance of a particular congregation remained dependent upon the scholar's own ability to command respect.

Attempts to define the rights and jurisdictions of scholars and Jewish communal councils also proved extremely contentious. Recurring subjects

of debate included the rabbinic exemption from communal taxes, and the exact definition of the governing principle of "majority rule." With regard to the latter, the general consensus among sixteenth-century rabbinic authorities was that majority rule was to be interpreted as applying to the internal governance of an individual *kahal* only, and not interactions among separate congregations within a Jewish settlement.<sup>49</sup> This interpretation had the effect of defending the autonomy of smaller congregations and their rabbis. Yet, even this generally accepted construct had its critics. Rabbi Joseph ibn Lev dissented from this general trend, arguing that the majority of congregations had the right to impose their will on the minority in any and all matters.<sup>50</sup> Levi ibn Habib took a novel view of the relationship between majority and minority within the Jewish community. He suggested that, despite its numerical predominance, the majority nonetheless operated as a faction in much the same way as the minority. He therefore concluded that majority decisions could only be enforced upon a group of dissenters if the latter were present at the time of the decision. If, he reasoned, a minority group was not present at the time a governing decision was reached, it was not given adequate opportunity to argue its case and thus persuade the majority. Any such decision was therefore not to be considered binding upon them.<sup>51</sup>

One of Ibn Habib's successors in Salonica, Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham Ha-Kohen (d. 1602), upheld this interpretation of communal interaction, arguing that open debate was necessary to determine a true majority opinion. He responded to an interesting case in which a synagogue official went to discuss a matter with other communal leaders one at a time, and then recorded their opinions as a means of obtaining a majority decision. Ha-Cohen denounced such tactics, although it is likely that they remained a common feature of the highly combative world of Jewish self-government in larger centers such as Salonica.<sup>52</sup>

On the subject of taxes owed by scholars, Alashkar declared they should be exempt from paying taxes even if they spent part of their day in trade, as long as their principal goal was to support themselves in order that they may study Torah. He stated that such a scholar "must be exempt from levies imposed upon the Jewish community by the government, even though he might have property and wealth."<sup>53</sup> Such declarations of personal exemption tested the limits of respect that the rest of the community had for these scholars. The average Jew who saw these scholars engaging in trade and accumulating wealth would have been less supportive of this exemption when asked to shoulder an increasingly large percentage of the tax burden demanded by the non-Jewish authorities.

## On the Margins of Sephardic Society

In trading networks like those of the early modern Sephardim, ethnic or cultural homogeneity was the basis for transregional communities in which members united for mutual support.<sup>54</sup> This is particularly notable when we contrast groups such as the Sephardim with the majority cultures in which they operated. Nonetheless, internal distinctions and disjunctures challenged the strength of these networks. While a certain degree of communal cohesion was necessary for these disparate nodes of minority groups to function as economic and social networks, the limits of ethnic solidarity cannot be ignored. Well after the Sephardic merchants, artisans, scholars, and courtiers recovered from the initial trauma of 1492, the Sephardic Diaspora continued to be comprised of a large stratum of impoverished Jews who remained effectively excluded from the supracommunal networks that traversed the Mediterranean.

The successive expulsions and mass migrations of Jews during the sixteenth century only compounded problems of poverty and social dislocation that had become endemic during the Middle Ages.<sup>55</sup> In the wake of 1492, poverty continued to be widespread in all regions of the Sephardic world, and each set of communal leaders was required to attend to the poor of its own congregation. Those who neglected their duties risked denunciation to the non-Jewish authorities and the attendant fines.<sup>56</sup> Still, public funds often proved insufficient to maintain the poor.<sup>57</sup> For their part, rabbinic authorities generally defended the poor as hapless victims of the wealthy, though some observers argued that their pecuniary state inevitably led to debased moral behavior.<sup>58</sup> Some rabbis presented various legal positions regarding the participation of the poor in civic government, but these theoretical arguments had relatively little impact. While there was ongoing debate among Jewish legal authorities over the need to allow poor Jews some voice in communal government, the poor were never really integrated into the political process in any meaningful way. In Salonica, a rebellion against the congregational leadership arose due to their abuse of the congregation's poorer members, who complained that they felt like "sheep who have no shepherd."<sup>59</sup> They may, indeed, have been correct. One of Salonica's leading rabbinic authorities, Abraham di Boton (d. 1580), argued that most communal matters were financial in nature, and that the selection of communal leadership should therefore be limited to taxpayers.<sup>60</sup>

The Jewish poor who came to settle in North Africa were similarly marginalized. In Fez, the Sephardim promulgated communal ordinances aimed at shielding the poor from the monopolistic tendencies of certain merchant



associations. The text of these regulations complains that the monopolies threatened “to consume the poor and the needy . . . persecuting the unfortunate poor and depriving them of their livelihood. For the [monopolists] have taken counsel and conspired against [the poor], and there is not enough room to record the devices of the oppression. The cries of the poor for help have ascended to God, and we have adopted an enactment that is recorded herein.”<sup>61</sup>

Such tensions between rich and poor, though common in early modern Sephardic society, were not constant. They were provoked and exacerbated by periods of acute financial distress, but such flare-ups were relatively short-lived.<sup>62</sup> The impoverished generally existed beyond the social and economic boundaries of the great mercantile networks for which the Sephardic Diaspora has become so readily identified. As with their Muslim and Christian counterparts, the Jewish poor existed on the margins of Jewish society, both literally and figuratively.<sup>63</sup> Poorer Jews settled in shantytowns on the outskirts of cities. Even in those cities where rich and poor shared the same general neighborhood, they nonetheless continued to inhabit very different domestic spaces. In Istanbul, the Sephardic scholar Moses Almosnino noted that wealthy Jewish women remained inside all day, while the tight quarters of the poor forced them to hang out their windows, a practice that led to persistent gossiping.<sup>64</sup>

The tumultuous life of Yakuta, a Jewish girl born into the second generation of the Spanish exile, is illustrative of the plight of those who inhabited the margins of Sephardic society in the decades following 1492. At the age of nine, Yakuta was betrothed to a much older man in the North African port of Tripoli. In 1510, she had lived with him for nearly a year when the Spanish conquered the city. At that time, her husband was captured, taken away, and never heard from again. Yakuta later migrated to Cairo, where she grew into adulthood and, in 1522, sought an annulment of her marriage in order to marry a new husband. Her predicament was one that was all too familiar to Jewish women of this period. Without a formal grant of divorce, Yakuta fell into a legal category of *agunot*, a term that literally meant “tethered,” and that described the sad status of Jewish women who were still legally bound to husbands who had failed to grant them a divorce before abandoning them in one way or another. The cumulative effect of expulsion, forced conversion, and a host of other calamities conspired to produce an entire generation of *agunot* who were caught in marital limbo, and whose status made them a burden upon their families and communities.<sup>65</sup>

Yakuta's situation was therefore not unique, and she had little to gain from pleading for a legal exception based solely on the difficulties she had suffered. Instead, she sought emancipation from her marital status on the grounds that her father had not given his approval to the union, and thus it

was never valid. Her tactic proved successful, and in 1524 Yakuta was granted an annulment by a Jewish court in Cairo. Officially liberated from her status as *agunah*, she remarried and started a family.

Unfortunately, the matter did not end there. Several judges in Cairo disagreed with the court's ruling, leading to a dispute that raged for years and involved a variety of leading rabbinic scholars, who sustained the debate even as some of them left Cairo for other cities. As the case passed from one rabbinic court to another, new witnesses were called and new details about the original betrothal emerged. Through this long process, it was eventually determined that Yakuta's father had initially quarreled with the father of her first groom over the amount of the dowry, but that an accord was reached before the wedding, and that her father had indeed given his consent to the union. In Jerusalem, the court of Rabbi Jacob Berab declared that there was therefore no reason to invalidate the first marriage, and that Yakuta's current marriage was illegal and her children illegitimate.<sup>66</sup> Berab subsequently convinced the current husband to separate from his wife. In turn, the Cairo rabbinic court that had granted Yakuta an annulment from her first marriage responded to this decision by threatening her husband with a ban if he dared to abandon her. Some twenty-five years after her initial betrothal, Yakuta found herself caught in a legal dispute between rival rabbinic authorities as her life hung in the balance.

Yakuta's case touches upon some of the central themes of Jewish communal life during the early formation of the Sephardic Diaspora. First, it provides a poignant illustration of how the problems of war, enslavement, and migration shaped the lives of individual Jews at this time. Second, it alludes to the fact that betrothal of Jewish girls at a young age became quite popular among the second and third generation of the Spanish exile, whether due to the adoption of local customs or as a response to social and fiscal pressures. Alliances forged through marriage had long been a bulwark of Jewish society. In an age of great mobility and weak communal government, such alliances also offered the promise of a measure of financial stability and mutual aid. One might say that lateral ties among Jews increased in importance at times when the support and security of vertical ties within the community proved insufficient. As one contemporary Sephardic preacher noted: "The greater their suffering, the greater their desire to get married."<sup>67</sup>

## Conclusion

The Sephardic trading networks that developed from the mid-sixteenth century onward emerged as one of the few positive results of the social and

political upheaval of the 1490s. It was precisely the itinerant nature of the early Sephardic Diaspora and the need for Sephardic Jews and Conversos to rely on one another that helped to foster these mercantile networks. Nor were merchants the only Jews for whom the network model proves applicable. Sephardic scholars also maintained far-flung associations that helped them to reestablish their position within the shifting political framework of Mediterranean Jewish society. Impartial dedication to Jewish legal tradition, and to the moral and spiritual leadership of Jewish society as a whole, remained the guiding principal for rabbinic involvement in communal affairs. Yet, as much as scholars were motivated by such elevated ideals, they also depended upon the recognition of their expertise and opinion by fellow rabbis and the mercantile elite who formed the backbone of the *kahal*.

Indeed, the great value of these supracommunal associations becomes apparent when we consider the inherently factionalized nature of Mediterranean Jewish society during this period. As they had throughout the Middle Ages, early modern Jews continued to fight with their communal leaders, to avail themselves of Gentile courts and officials, and to protest indignantly that their leaders did the same. And just as these internal divisions demonstrate the basic instability of Jewish society, they also signal the degree to which Mediterranean Jews were integrated into, and dependent upon, the institutions of the Christian and Muslim societies in which they lived.

Finally, any discussion of Sephardic society during its formative period needs to recognize the limits of the network model. During the sixteenth century, Jews directly involved in these networks viewed them as a useful means of operating in a competitive world as much as they did natural expressions of Sephardic identity. Furthermore, while we may recognize the importance of trading networks to the social organization of Sephardic Jewry during the sixteenth century, we should not ignore the fact that many, if not most, Jews were effectively excluded from these systems. While mercantile networks encompassed Jewish artisans such as dyers, embroiderers, and tanners, as well as Jewish bankers, the Jewish poor remained outside of these expanding, transnational communities.

## Rabbinic and Popular Judaism in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean

We know neither the background nor the way of life of these men,  
nor what they believe or what they do not.

—Records of the Venetian Senate<sup>1</sup>

Political and social organization were not the only areas of Jewish society in which the realities of daily life fell short of the ideals set forth by Jewish tradition. The performance of religious obligations and customs also became an arena in which the contours of the Sephardic Diaspora were asserted and contested. There can be little doubt that the central religious features of Judaism—the observance of its precepts, the performance of rituals, and the offering of prayers—served to meet a human need for spiritual expression. Yet such personal religious practices also had an important social function. Religion operated as an organizing principle in Sephardic life. The key elements of this process included the adoption of local customs in new areas of settlement, the importance of public displays of piety and allotment of honors, and the different ways in which rabbis and average Jews dealt with the religious identity of the former Conversos who reverted to Judaism during this period. The shared set of religious values and, especially, the shared legal tradition that had bound together Mediterranean Jewry for centuries continued to allow for mutual recognition, understanding, and support throughout

the Jewish world. However, the divisions between rabbinic ideals and popular practice that had strained Jewish solidarity before 1492 remained a defining characteristic of Sephardic life.

### Rabbinic and Popular Judaism

In a letter sent to the Spanish crown in 1501, Christopher Columbus included the following observation concerning human spirituality: "I say that the Holy Spirit prevails among Christians, Jews, Moors and in all other sects, and not only among the learned, but more so among the ignorant people." Columbus's assertion of religious universalism was primarily a gesture of inclusiveness for all people. However, it also points to a recognized division between the learned and the masses that was analogous to boundaries separating members of different religious communities.<sup>2</sup> Our modern interest in the historical tensions between Christians, Muslims, and Jews has often led us to overlook the internal antagonisms within each of these religions that often divided elites from the rest of society. Columbus's assertion that the masses are in fact *more* imbued with divine grace than the learned recognizes the popular association of ignorance and impiety, even as it repudiates it.

Distrust of popular religiosity and fear of religious subterfuge were relatively common themes among both Jewish and Christian elites long before the rise of Converso society in Spain turned these subjects into a national obsession. In fact, questions surrounding religious orthodoxy and the acceptable level of popular deviation are eternally present in the development of all religious traditions. In the world of the early modern Mediterranean, religious practices often diverged from standard legal and theological doctrines.<sup>3</sup> This gap between theologians and the average person echoed across the divides of confessional communities. As one historian of early modern Spain has recently noted, religion was "an extension of social discourse rather than a system of faith; it was, in other words, what you did rather than what you believed."<sup>4</sup>

What Jews did during this period challenges some of our notions of traditional or normative Judaism. For all the attention given to Hispano-Jewish piety in the face of the twin challenges of Inquisition and Expulsion, it was the enduring disparity between the ideals of the rabbinic elite and the popular practices of the Jewish masses that represented a more notable feature of Sephardic religious life during the sixteenth century. Sephardic rabbis continued to imagine themselves as their communities' leaders, while maintaining a posture that was often aloof and, at times, contemptuous of the average Jew. The inherent tension between these would-be leaders and their flocks

continued long after 1492 and was exacerbated by similar attitudes prevalent among their Muslim and Christian counterparts.<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that the average Jew lacked piety or religious zeal. On the contrary, what little information that we do possess concerning popular religion among the Spanish exiles and their coreligionists throughout the Mediterranean indicates an extensive, even ornate, system of ritual and belief. Religion continued to play a central role in their lives, as it had throughout the Middle Ages, but the religious ideologies and the ways in which they were expressed were often at odds with the norms of Judaism as interpreted by contemporary rabbis.

This dissonance raises questions about how the majority of the Sephardim, and indeed Jewish society in general, understood the meaning and relative importance of the various religious rituals, laws, and customs that defined Jewish society. The case of a Jewish woman who had been captured at sea, sold to a Christian master in Malta, and subsequently converted to Christianity is instructive in this regard. Denounced by her Christian husband for reverting to Judaism, this woman was brought before the papal Inquisition, where she offered the following testimony:

"I have never pretended to be Jewish in order to save my life. . . . I went to church because I couldn't afford not to do so . . . but I have never confessed. I went to Mass because I liked listening to the sermons, but I never kneeled down before any priest, neither in order to confess nor in order to receive the Holy Communion." . . . Asked what she felt about her Christian faith she answered: "I was forced to stay with Christians and if I had had the intention of becoming Christian I would have become Christian the first day, and I was enslaved." This former *Conversa* had been married to a Jew when captured, but the marriage was nullified following baptism. When asked about her marriage to her second husband, a Christian who ultimately denounced her, she simply replied: "My second husband liked me and I liked him."<sup>6</sup>

This statement offers a glimpse at the religious worldview of an average person whose life was shaped by events that were far beyond her control, and whose actions had religious and legal ramifications that were most likely beyond her full comprehension. It stands as a reminder that much of what Sephardic Jews understood to be their religious heritage transcended the well-known features of Jewish law (*halakha*), communal custom, and ritual. It was a heritage that included more mutable elements of popular religious practice that Jews shared with Christians and Muslims throughout the Mediterranean. Many sixteenth-century peoples understood the terrestrial and

divine realms to be fundamentally intertwined, and their daily lives to be shaped by powerful supernatural forces. Belief in demons remained widespread, as did the instruments used to ward off their evil influence, such as making small sacrifices to the demons or wearing amulets.<sup>7</sup> Such expressions of popular religious beliefs had been part of Mediterranean monotheism since its inception, and during the sixteenth century they continued to lead to a variety of relationships across confessional boundaries. Members of all religious groups found their way to self-professed healers of different faiths in search of spiritual and magical aids such as charms, talismans, and spells.<sup>8</sup>

Jews also found alternative modes of expression for more standard forms of belief. For instance, familiarity with sacred texts often led to the use of biblical verses in charms and adjurations.<sup>9</sup> Communities would also institute “second Purims” to commemorate their deliverance from conquering armies, popular riots, and decrees of expulsion.<sup>10</sup> For some, popular demonstrations of piety took the form of fasting and performing good deeds, while others engaged in intensive study or participated in literary or mystical study groups.<sup>11</sup> Such lamentations notwithstanding, students of sacred literature were a central feature of Jewish society and represented an important link in the chain of Jewish tradition as the next generation of spiritual leaders and expounders of the Law. Like so many other facets of Jewish life in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean, the need for honest, respected, and capable rabbinic leaders was particularly acute. Students also brought honor to the masters under whom they studied, and they served their communities as public representatives of communal piety. In times of calamity or communal distress, students would parade through the streets of their home cities carrying Torah scrolls.<sup>12</sup> For all these reasons, and despite their complaints that they were overworked and too harried to bother with teaching, few Jewish scholars were willing to turn away dedicated students. Unfortunately, the quality and motivation of the students was not uniformly excellent, and the great sages of the day had to make do with what was available.<sup>13</sup>

Yet for most rabbis of the early Sephardic Diaspora, the more alarming development of the age was the ease with which their fellow exiles and their descendants came to adopt the folk customs (Jewish as well as Muslim) in their new areas of settlement. In North Africa, local Jewish men followed the practice of their Muslim counterparts of shaving their heads as well as growing long beards that they would comb and perfume.<sup>14</sup> Mustarab Jews removed their shoes before entering the synagogue, following Muslim custom, and unmarried men were barred from reading the Torah in synagogue, due to their unchaste thoughts.<sup>15</sup> In cities such as Oran, Jews also sought retribution against anyone who insulted a Kohen (a person of priestly descent),

a practice that seems to have been influenced by a similar Muslim custom regarding descendants of the Prophet.<sup>16</sup> Jewish communal regulations also came to reflect the social and cultural attitudes of their Muslim neighbors. This was particularly evident in legislation dealing with the dress and general comportment of Jewish women. Indeed, the customs of Jewish women were, perhaps, the most affected by the social norms of Muslim society. Jewish and Muslim women alike frequented the same pilgrimage sites and tombs in the Holy Land, and used the same amulets and potions in order to ask for fertility, easy childbirth, and the protection of their children.<sup>17</sup>

Iberian rabbis who fled to North Africa wrote of their shock and dismay at the prevalence of several customs and beliefs among the Mustarab Jews that they considered to be superstitious and fundamentally foreign to Jewish tradition.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, these European rabbis found their Maghrebi counterparts to be poorly acquainted with Talmudic literature, relying almost solely on the Maimonides' legal code, the *Mishneh Torah*, for guidance.<sup>19</sup> At times, the piety of Sephardic scholars could manifest itself in attitudes toward the masses that were imperious, even bordering on the insensitive. Rabbinic distaste for the popular custom of invoking the Lord's name in a number of aspects of daily life led to condemnations of this practice, with special mention of the popularity of the habit among women.<sup>20</sup> Jewish women who acted as professional mourners also drew the ire of the rabbis by performing at Gentile funerals and festivals.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, the Sephardim who settled in Muslim lands adopted the Mustarab custom of hiring Muslim women to play music and dance at Jewish weddings. Complaints that such entertainment led to any number of iniquities committed by Jewish wedding guests eventually caused the custom to be banned by Jewish communal authorities.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, rabbis were forced to make accommodations to many popular customs, even when these conflicted with Jewish law.<sup>23</sup> The majority of the Jewish refugees from Iberia who settled in the Mediterranean soon adopted aspects of the local religious culture of the indigenous Jews among whom they came to live. That is to say that the Sephardim readily blurred the line between cultural customs and religious beliefs, not as an act of defiance, but as a natural product of acculturation. Despite their aversion to this process, leading rabbinic authorities quickly recognized its inevitability. Rabbi Simon ben Zemach Duran could be harsh in his critique of Maghrebi Jewish practices, yet he urged his fellow rabbis of Iberian heritage to treat the customs of local Jews with deference and understanding.<sup>24</sup> Others preached the need for greater latitude in such cases as a matter of practicality. Moses Alashkar chastised a fellow rabbi who wanted to prohibit Sephardic women from adopting the head covering used by Maghrebi women, calling him



insensitive. He added: "Since this scholar is unable to prevent this practice, he should not have prohibited it. Even if the practice violates a biblical law, we can invoke the Talmudic principle: 'Let Israel be! Better that they should be unintentional transgressors than intentional transgressors.'" <sup>25</sup> A similar response came from another rabbinic leader who cautioned his colleagues to choose their battles carefully when it came to question of morality and popular custom. When asked about the possibility of expanding prohibitions against sexual contact among married couples, the rabbi explained that there was little sense in creating new restrictions when the current ones were routinely violated: "Would that they observe what is already imposed upon them!" <sup>26</sup>

As with these rabbinic authorities, Sephardic secular leaders also made their peace with many of the folk beliefs and customs of the Jewish masses. Folk religion, it was generally understood, was not irreligion. However, rabbis and lay leaders alike bristled at any evidence of religious laxity. In discussing the association between social status and religious observance among the Jews of Istanbul, Moses Almosnino theorized that the Jews who were lax in their observance tended to be drawn from the ranks of the very rich or the very poor. He offered the following explanation of this phenomenon:

The reason that there are such extremes is due to the fact that men tend to occupy one of two extremes: either very busy or very lazy, as we have said. Those who are busy in their dealings with great men during the mornings and afternoons are not able to excuse themselves from such work, and they believe themselves to have no choice in this, and they become so accustomed to missing [prayers] that even when they have time they do not go because they have not become accustomed to it. <sup>27</sup>

Almosnino also suggested that "the poor, not being virtuous for not having a means of maintaining themselves by work, as we have said, go seeking and creating ways of being bad and [seek] to offend their neighbors in all ways possible." <sup>28</sup> These observations may strike us as overly broad and biased toward the middle class to which Almosnino belonged. Nevertheless, the belief that both the indigent and the wealthy were particularly susceptible to impious behavior was widespread. <sup>29</sup> Almosnino's remarks are echoed by Isaac Abravanel, a courtier, diplomat, and one of the wealthiest and most powerful Jews of the age. Abravanel was acutely aware of the high moral cost of temporal success. In his commentary on the classic ethical compilation *Pirkei Avot* (Sayings of the Fathers), he writes:

I have seen prominent men at the gates putting aside eternal life and, like slaves, running after temporal affairs only. All their days are occupied in the pursuit of money and comforts . . . or in the ways of sinners. They indulge themselves in laughter and light-mindedness, and take no notice of God's work, the first of his ways, the gift of Torah.<sup>30</sup>

Communal leaders responded to religious negligence among their fellow Jews in a variety of ways. Some Sephardic rabbis abandoned efforts to enforce religious observance among the masses, choosing instead to dedicate themselves to intellectual pursuits.<sup>31</sup> In other instances, rabbis who were appointed by their congregations to maintain morality and religious discipline were accused of fixating on petty matters of religious observance, while disregarding more serious, and more deeply entrenched, transgressions.<sup>32</sup> Discouraged by the relative ineffectiveness of the rabbinic elite, some communal councils attempted to force the members of their community to assume greater responsibility for policing matters of ethical behavior and religious observance. In Fez, Jewish leaders issued ordinances aimed at encouraging greater religious observance by distributing responsibility for its enforcement throughout the community. Craftsmen were required to ensure that their apprentices attended daily prayers and fulfilled other religious obligations.<sup>33</sup> Similar attempts to enlist the help of certain sectors of the community to enforce the pious behavior of others can be seen in regulations concerning female modesty. On the island of Corfu, women were ordered to cover their flesh because exposing the female form "causes strengthening and the arousal of evil passions." It seems, however, that the communal leaders faced an uphill battle in the implementation of these statutes, and thus ordered husbands and fathers to help regulate modesty among their female relatives. The communal statutes declared: "It shall be an obligation resting on every man to exhort his wife time and again [to act properly], and so too shall a father exhort his daughter, in order that the daughters of Israel may dress modestly, and not like outcasts."<sup>34</sup>

### Honor and the Maintenance of Social Order

The extant records of Sephardic popular religion during the sixteenth century have yet to yield a figure as alluring and informative as that of Menocchio, the Italian miller whose unique religious worldview was brought to life by Carlo Ginzburg in his classic study *The Cheese and the Worms*.<sup>35</sup> Whereas the now-famous peasant philosopher provided his inquisitors with an entire cosmology that challenged the Catholic orthodoxy of his day, his

sixteenth-century Jewish counterparts left behind a more modest record of their religious outlook. We possess no detailed popular vision of the divine realm, and no explicit legacy that could help modern scholars reconstruct the origins of seventeenth-century popular movements such as the spread of Lurianic Kabbalah, or the wave of messianic expectation that grew up around the enigmatic figure of Shabbetai Sevi. Nonetheless, the absence of full, extensive accounts of heterodox Jewish attitudes should not lead us to assume that such diversity did not exist. The brief inferences of popular religion among the Jews of the early Sephardic Diaspora suggest a significant disparity between rabbinic ideals regarding Jewish thought and practice and the role that they played in the lives of most Jews.

In the account given by the Converso/Jewish weaver Luis de la Isla (discussed in chapter 3), he noted that he accompanied a group of Jewish merchants to religious services, but remained outside the synagogue with other young servants like himself. The anecdote is noteworthy because the synagogue was intended to be a place of prayer and religious ritual for all Jews. In practice, however, it often functioned as a means of reinforcing social hierarchy; a place where honors were publicly bestowed, power asserted, and communal order maintained. As such, the synagogue was a place dominated by the upper classes of Jews. The role of Jewish servants and the Jewish poor in this performance of religious and communal power was ancillary at best. It might be argued that Luis and the others who remained outside the synagogue should be seen, for this act alone, as marginal figures within the Jewish world. Indeed it is possible that several of these servants were either current or former Conversos like Luis, whose Jewish identity was still considered to be a work in progress. Nonetheless, Luis' account coincides with other contemporary observations of the Jewish poor and lower classes within the Sephardic Diaspora.

A warning issued by David ibn Abi Zimra against rabbis who used charitable funds to enhance the beauty of the synagogue rather than to better the lot of the poor alludes to a practice that many in the community clearly supported.<sup>36</sup> Throughout the Mediterranean Jewish world, communal leaders were punctilious about controlling which congregants were allowed to participate in certain religious services. Members of each congregation jealously guarded their place in the daily or holiday services, or in the synagogue itself. Rights to seats were sold along with other honors, and the social hierarchy of the community was often given physical expression in the sanctuary. Challenges to any of these rights and honors did not pass unnoticed. Violence sometimes erupted when a member's rightful place in the worship service was usurped, such as in the order in which names were read during a memorial service.<sup>37</sup>

Most Jews would flock to their local synagogues every Sabbath and during the many holidays that ordered the Jewish year, but far fewer attended the daily morning and afternoon prayers. Nor were religious services and major festivals always the pious and solemn affairs we might imagine. Much to the chagrin of Jewish moralists and spiritual leaders, it was common for congregants to socialize or conduct business during prayers, while others who disagreed with the prayer-leader's arrangement and interpretation of the liturgy might respond with loud protests, and even violence.<sup>38</sup> For many Jews, daily or even weekly prayer services at the local synagogue were not essential to their Jewish identity. In fact, the performance of sacred duties such as daily and Sabbath prayers and the reading of the Torah could and often did take place at private, in-house synagogues created by prominent members of the community to serve their families and closest associates. The function of the large, public synagogues was far more diverse. In addition to being places of prayer, study, and festive celebration, these communal synagogues were also the juridical and social locus of a given *kahal*.

For those who did attend daily and weekly services with regularity, the early modern synagogue functioned as much more than just a house of prayer. It was the primary stage upon which acts of piety were performed, and those acts carried important social corollaries. Moreover, as the site where communal ordinances and other matters of import were announced and legal cases adjudicated, the synagogue was also a place in which communal power was exercised. Most communal synagogues also had schools attached to them, and were thus places of socialization for younger members of the community, as well as sites of continued social control for all members. The synagogue was the Jewish political space par excellence, and it was here that the external boundaries and internal framework of the community were set and controlled.<sup>39</sup>

In a society in which power was based as much on personal charisma and voluntary recognition of status as on theories of political jurisdiction and authority, public demonstrations of piety and honor were of the highest importance.<sup>40</sup> Thus, in addition to its personal dimensions, pious behavior also functioned as a very public barometer of social status within Jewish society, and brought with it a measure of authority. The various rituals and observances associated with Jewish religious life were outlets for spiritual expression, but they also provided a continuous set of opportunities for the acquisition of honor. Similarly, it was common for those with the financial means to do so to give funds for the maintenance of study houses in their own cities and in the Holy Land.<sup>41</sup> Such charitable contributions were then announced in the synagogue, thus giving honor to the donor.<sup>42</sup> In a letter

describing the public nature of charitable donations, one rabbi observed that a Jew would perform these acts at the synagogue “so that he and his relatives among the worshippers would receive honor and glory from his entire congregation, for we see today that all members of the congregation make every effort to bring into their congregation generous people [who give to] charity, and the entire congregation honors them more than other people of the congregation.”<sup>43</sup>

Charity and the public recognition of the honors associated with it were vital components of social and religious life among Mediterranean Jews, and its regulation was matter of communal concern. Over the course of the Middle Ages, Jewish congregations had developed an intricate system by which religious honors were partitioned and sold among their members. Throughout the Sephardic Diaspora, communities continued to draw up ordinances that detailed the manner in which the various functions in the synagogue were to be sold, as illustrated by the following excerpt from Jerusalem:

It is the custom in Jerusalem, the holy city, that the privilege of lighting the synagogue on the Sabbath is sold in advance, that is, that a Jew from Jerusalem, or Aleppo, or Damascus or some other city purchase a specific Sabbath. This costs approximately six gold ducats. This Sabbath then belongs to him for the remainder of his lifetime. On the Sabbath he lights all the synagogue lamps at his own expense, which costs approximately one-and-a-half ducats, and all of that Sabbath's honors belong to him: he may choose whomever he likes as the precentor and as the seven Torah readers, and all the deceased members of his family are given honorable mention while the living ones are blessed. And if he so desires he can donate a meal to the poor. Each Sabbath is owned by a different individual. Upon such an individual's death, the privilege is sold to another.<sup>44</sup>

The purchase of honors allowed not only for the public demonstration of devotion, but also for a certain level of patronage, as the person in charge of the Sabbath was allowed to assign additional honors to others. The ordinance also goes on to mention a specific case in which a fight broke out between an elder of the congregation and a synagogue official (*hazan*) over the right to perform the honor of lighting the ceremonial lamp during the festival of Hanukah. The community's judge barred both disputants from performing the honor for a year, and the one found to have committed the greater infraction was barred from the synagogue altogether for thirty days. The announcement of the punishments was made before the entire congregation in a manner that mirrored the public nature of the conflict.

Also noteworthy is the coda to this story that mentions the eventual reduction of the sentence, which allowed the congregant who had been banned from attending synagogue services to return after only one week. It is possible that there was some concern that such a penalty might lead to impiety, though the text makes no mention of this consideration. Rather, it seems that public shame and the blow to personal status were what mattered most. The account of the incident notes: "After the old man had been home a week, all of the local scholars appealed to the communal judge, who permitted him to join the congregation since he was an important elder, and his son, who was prominent in Egypt, sent them contributions."<sup>45</sup> The conclusion to this little anecdote underscores the practicalities associated with public religious life and communal control in Jewish society. Communal leaders were careful that their punishment of rebellious members not be exceedingly damaging to the members' honor, especially when those members were related to important benefactors.

Competition for honor and prestige had been one for the hallmarks of Hispano-Jewish society throughout the late Middle Ages.<sup>46</sup> As Sephardic society took shape during the century after 1492, it continued to be bound together by the pursuit and defense of honor, though different sectors of society appear to have possessed different notions of what this term meant. Rabbi Moses Almosnino, who openly expressed his contempt for the lower orders of Jewish society, accused the Jewish *vulgo*, or common people, of confusing honor with arrogance and vanity.<sup>47</sup> Almosnino's derogation of the *vulgo* notwithstanding, the defense of personal honor was more important to some learned Sephardim than the protection of their faith. Sephardic rabbis who converted in order to return to Spain after 1492 were willing to abandon their faith, but not the honorifics that distinguished them as learned men. In their conversion to Christianity, they were careful to preserve the honor and status associated with their titles, exchanging "Rabbi" for "Maestre."<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Conversos guarded their honor as good and faithful Christians as zealously as they had once defended their reputations as pious Jews. In the years following 1492, Conversos living in Spain complained bitterly to royal officials that their "Old" Christian neighbors insulted them through the use of terms like "Jews," "Marranos," and "turncoats" (*tornadizos*). The crown defended them, threatening severe penalties for the use of such invective.<sup>49</sup>

In Muslim lands, where rabbis obtained exemption from all taxes, some Jews attempted to extend this honor to other synagogue functionaries whose taxes the community paid. Similarly, many families of scholars and prayer readers sought to expand the scope of this privilege by making these exemptions hereditary.<sup>50</sup> And just as honor could be achieved, so too could it be

easily lost. Tensions between prominent scholars often led to complaints that their authority was being publicly challenged, which caused them to lose standing within the community.<sup>51</sup> In Ottoman Aleppo, Sephardic scholars complained of suffering insults and harassment from the local Mustarab Jews.<sup>52</sup> As with tax exemptions, the honor and fame of prominent scholars was something that endured long after their deaths. Rabbi Moses di Trani, a student of the Sephardic sage Jacob Berab, came to the defense of his teacher's grandson when the latter was verbally attacked by a powerful Jewish notable in Cairo. During the feud, which led both parties to denounce one another before the Muslim authorities, Moses implored the local Jewish community to remember the nobility of Berab's lineage—the piety and renown of his father and grandfather. An attack on any member of this scholarly family, he argued, was tantamount to an attack on his ancestors and the continued power and honor of their memory.<sup>53</sup>

Even those Jews who were not courtiers or members of rabbinic dynasties guarded their reputations with great care. Jews who sought to bring legal suits against other members of their communities had to be sure that they could provide sufficient proof of wrongdoing, lest they be countersued for defamation of character. A letter was sent to Moses Alashkar in which the rabbi was asked: "A woman claimed that she had sexual relations with a certain man and that she was pregnant with his child. The man in question is known for his character and good deeds, and he denied the accusation. Whom do we believe?" After stating that the woman's claim is to be rejected, Alashkar then added: "She should be penalized for vilifying this man's reputation. Even if we knew that the woman had had sexual relations with this man, we would have no proof that he was the father of the child, for she may have had illicit relations with other men as well."<sup>54</sup> As indicated here, Jewish women had to exercise particular caution when bringing cases against men, especially when they did not have male family members to aid in the defense of their honor and status. Women whose husbands had either converted or disappeared during the tumultuous exodus out of Iberia were particularly vulnerable to all forms of harassment from other members of the Jewish community.<sup>55</sup>

Wealthy Sephardic merchants were particularly active in the defense of their right to wear or not wear certain elements of clothing. Distinguishing marks on their clothes or use of certain accessories such as earrings, hats, and headscarves made Jews vulnerable to physical attack, but such instances were relatively rare. Much more common was the sentiment that laws intended to identify the religion of Jews were a blow to their honor and prestige. In Ancona, Jewish bankers petitioned to have their wives exempted from laws

requiring them to wear earrings as a mark of Jewishness. Their concern was the loss of respect and status, since such marks associated Jewish women with prostitutes.<sup>56</sup> They were eventually granted their request in 1497, when the city was in desperate need of loans to save it from bankruptcy.<sup>57</sup> In other Italian cities, authorities attempted to force Jewish women to wear a yellow veil that would have been the equivalent of the yellow patch worn by men.<sup>58</sup>

In Ottoman lands, Jews were forbidden to wear green or use white turbans. However, the Jewish merchants who settled there often wore both while traveling abroad in a clear association with the status denied to them in their home cities.<sup>59</sup> One rabbi acknowledged with displeasure the degree to which his fellow Jews used clothing as a measurement of personal and family status: "All honor is given to those who wear fine linen and embroidered cloth. . . . According to one's clothing and shirt, according to one's gown and turban so is one's honor and splendor. Woe to the generation that honors clothing!"<sup>60</sup> The popular clothing habits of Jewish women, in particular, drew the ire of their rabbis. One scholar commented derisively about Jewish women "consumed with jealousy and a passion for [their] appearance. . . . In our generation, women dress in scarlet and bedeck themselves with luxuries like crimson . . . and they appear in public adorned with jewels and garments like those of the princesses and daughters of the viziers and governors who rule over us."<sup>61</sup>

As such condemnations indicate, the representation and reaffirmation of social hierarchies also extended to Jewish women. Women who attended services at synagogues were relegated to galleries that were usually much smaller than the spaces allotted for male worship. Moreover, this limited space was generally dominated by the wives and daughters of wealthier families, who took the opportunity to display their finery. In his description of his visit to a synagogue in Italy, the English traveler Thomas Coryate wrote: "I saw many Jewish women, whereof some were as beautiful as ever I saw, and so gorgeous in their apparel, jewels, chains of gold and rings adorned with precious stones, that some of our English Countesses do scarce exceede them, having marvailous long traines like Princesses that are borne up by waiting women serving for the purpose."<sup>62</sup> The synagogue thus simultaneously set these Jewish women in a position distinct from (and somewhat inferior to) Jewish men, yet superior to the majority of other women in their community. Other public religious spaces were more democratic. The tombs and shrines of holy men and women brought together pilgrims from all sectors of society. Indeed, these sites were spaces for the public display of religious devotion not only for women of different social and economic levels, but even of different faiths.<sup>63</sup> Yet even here, the ability of wealthier women



to make donations of money, lamps, and so on to these shrines offered them an opportunity to obtain honor through public demonstrations of piety that exceeded those of the poorer Jews.

Information about women's spirituality in the early Sephardic Diaspora is considerably less accessible than that regarding their male counterparts, or that of the crypto-Jewish women who remained in Iberia.<sup>64</sup> Discussions on women found in the rabbinic texts of the period tend to focus on topics such as marital status, inheritance, and moral (particularly sexual) behavior.<sup>65</sup> Yet Sephardic women played a far more integral role in the popular religious life of their communities than rabbinic literature might indicate. During the Middle Ages, Hispano-Jewish women had been closely associated with public acts of mourning, including the practice of reciting dirges (*qinot* or *endechas*) at funerals and during the holiday of Tisha b'Av. After 1492, such public expressions of Jewish religiosity were rooted out by the Inquisition and disappeared in Spain and Portugal. The transition from Iberia to Diaspora also presented significant obstacles for these women. Former Conversas who had acted as prayer leaders when they lived in Iberia soon found the performance of this function far more difficult in the male-dominated Jewish communities of the Sephardic Diaspora. And yet, if Sephardic women's participation in religious ritual was curtailed, it did not disappear. On the contrary, they continued to be the primary voice of mourning in communities throughout the Mediterranean.<sup>66</sup> Sephardic women also perpetuated a number of religious and folkloric traditions through the performance and teaching of various *romanceros* (ballads) that dealt with biblical as well as secular themes.<sup>67</sup>

### The Converso Question

Nowhere in the Sephardic Diaspora was the question of religious conformity more acute than in the attitudes toward the Conversos who sought to return to Judaism. Modern historians have generally presented the history of the Conversos in epic, almost hagiographic terms that highlight their pious dedication to Judaism. If the migration of Jews from Spain in 1492 is seen as a tragedy, that of the Portuguese Conversos is portrayed as a tale of self-liberation, a desperate flight from persecution to religious freedom. The emotional cast of these narratives is, of course, understandable. Many Conversos did indeed withstand great hardship and danger in their efforts to preserve their bonds to Judaism, and to eventually revert to their ancestral faith. What is often lost in these accounts is the complex set of reasons behind the Conversos' decision to leave Iberia, and the equally varied attitudes toward them

held by the Jews among whom they settled. In point of fact, the Sephardic Jews who preceded the majority of these New Christians into the Mediterranean did not always share our modern, heroic image of the Conversos. The triumphal image of forced converts cleaving defiantly to their former religion until such time as they could profess it openly had great appeal to many Jews, then as now. The social reality of the Conversos' reentry into Jewish society was, however, far more complex.<sup>68</sup>

The notion that Conversos and their descendants were still Jewish remained the mainstream rabbinic view throughout the sixteenth century. It is perhaps not surprising that those most responsible for defending the sanctity of Judaism continued to reject conversions made by force or royal fiat, or that they refused to abandon hope that these victims would one day return openly to Judaism. The Castilian-born scholar Jacob ibn Habib, who settled in Muslim Salonica, summed up the position of those who continued to see the Conversos and their offspring as fundamentally Jewish: "Tomorrow they will come here, and how can we oust them now by judging them to be apostates?"<sup>69</sup> Jewish authors who had passed through conversion in Spain or Portugal before escaping the peninsula helped to popularize the image of the Converso as a defiantly pious Jew. For these writers, the persistence of Jewish practice and identity among the Conversos was seen not as heresy or proof of the intractable nature of the Jews, but as a badge of honor. The Spanish exile Solomon ibn Verga was among those who converted under duress in 1497. In his chronicle of Iberian Jewry, he boasted: "In three cases water has flowed in vain: the water of the river to the sea, the water in wine and the water at a Jew's baptism."<sup>70</sup> Abraham Saba, who also experienced the forced conversions in Portugal first-hand, gave a similar description of the Converso community there. He writes that, after the forced conversions,

those who remained in Portugal publicly sanctified God's name and gave their lives for this. They also remained imprisoned for long periods of time. The perfect and holy scholar, Rabbi Simon Maimi and his sons-in-law were all truly righteous, as was his wife and other truly righteous individuals. Even though [the Portuguese] did everything to have them forcibly converted, they maintained their guard and observed the Torah and the mitzvot in spite of the king and his ministers, until Rabbi Simon finally died. By that time, there was not another Jew in the entire country except for me and those who were in prison with me. It was due to the merits of this righteous man that a father and his son who were Conversos worked in that prison, and the two were given permission to take the body [of Rabbi Simon] outside the city and bury it. They took the body outside

the city, and more than forty righteous Conversos who had been forced to convert against their will gathered together. They then buried him in the Jewish cemetery and eulogized him as is proper.<sup>71</sup>

Saba's emphasis on the continued Jewishness—indeed, righteousness—of the Conversos became a standard motif in Sephardic literary representations of Converso religious identity.

Such literary characterization of the Conversos notwithstanding, popular Jewish sentiment was far from unified on this matter. The diversity of opinion on Converso religious identity that had characterized the Jews of fifteenth-century Spain continued during the sixteenth century throughout the Sephardic Diaspora. As in the pre-Expulsion period, those who continued to argue for the essential Jewishness of the Conversos were usually guided as much by self-interest as by a desire to preserve the sanctity of Judaism. Many among the first and second generation of the exile from Spain had relatives, friends, intellectual colleagues, and business partners among those who became Christian between 1492 and 1497. For these, the question of Converso religious identity was thus bound up with strong personal emotions and social bonds. For Jews without any such direct connections to the Conversos—a group whose numbers continued to grow as the sixteenth century wore on—acceptance of the intrinsic Jewishness of these “New Christians” turned on more practical issues. For the Jews of North Africa, for instance, the Conversos who remained in Portugal represented an important link to that kingdom's considerable mercantile wealth. The incentive to maintain close ties to the Portuguese Conversos also extended to those who fled the peninsula and sought to return to Jewish life. Many Maghrebi Jews quickly realized that the acceptance of these new arrivals as fellow Jews, even if they had been born long after 1497, brought with it clear financial benefits. Jews who were willing to act as tutors to former Conversos were often rewarded with their patronage and business, a fact that made the decision to accept them in the Jewish community that much easier.<sup>72</sup>

Other members of the Sephardic Diaspora took a darker view of New Christians who sought to reenter Jewish society. As time passed, it appeared that the descendants of converts who remained in Iberia had accommodated to life as professing Christians. For many Mediterranean Jews, particularly those who did not have roots in Spain and Portugal, the Conversos looked less like beleaguered *anusim* than willing apostates. One of Salonica's leading scholars, Samuel de Medina, offered a cautious assessment of Converso identity that was characteristic of this shift:

It is worthwhile to inquire thoroughly into the cases of those *anusim* who were converted through coercion and who stayed many years among the Gentiles rather than saving their souls from the apostasy by escaping to another country in which they would be able to worship God with no fear. If there are among them some who could have escaped and saved their souls from apostasy, but instead converted and in time cast off the heavenly yoke, then they have cut the chains of the Torah of their own free will. They follow the laws of the Gentiles, transgressing all the commandments of the Torah, even going so far as to persecute the Jews.<sup>73</sup>

De Medina's statement shows an awareness that many among the Conversos had become leading missionaries and polemicists against Judaism, a fact that no doubt gave pause to Jews in accepting those who sought to return to the faith. Other rabbis saw the Conversos' reticence to leave Iberia as a matter of apathy, criticizing those who had the ability to flee Portugal and Christianity, but not the will.<sup>74</sup> David ibn Abi Zimra argued: "If they would only have the will, they would return to the faith of Israel."<sup>75</sup> For Isaac Abravanel, such lack of motivation was akin to a total lack of faith. He noted with derision that those who remained behind as Conversos "do not believe in either of the two religions, in the Law of God or in the laws of the Gentiles."<sup>76</sup>

Such misgivings about Conversos' commitment to Judaism came to vie with the more sympathetic attitudes cited above, both among rabbinic leaders and among the Jewish masses. Considering the jealousy and mistrust that often divided Jewish congregations internally as well as from one another, it is not surprising that some Jews perceived the Conversos to be wily cultural commuters rather than hapless victims. The belief that many among the New Christians readily took advantage of financial and political opportunities that were denied to professing Jews became widespread as the sixteenth century wore on. Jews who had taken refuge in Muslim lands watched with consternation and anger as many Conversos who "fled" from Iberian oppression settled in the trading centers of Catholic Italy. When a group of twenty-four such former Conversos were executed for heresy in Ancona, many Jews saw their fate as divine punishment for their willingness to place profit above piety. One rabbi argued that the Conversos should not have gone to Ancona, or any Christian land, after their experience with Christian intolerance in Portugal.<sup>77</sup>

Suspensions regarding the Conversos' religious loyalties were, to some extent, well founded. Not all of the Conversos who managed to escape Iberia returned openly to Judaism in their new areas of settlement, a fact that had begun to cause problems among Mediterranean Jews even before 1492. In

1459, a small group of Toledan Conversos fleeing religious violence in that city sought sanctuary among the Jews of Egypt. Upon arriving in their new home, the former New Christians sought to return to Judaism, but hesitated in formally joining a local *kahal*. For six years, the Toledan émigrés managed to live as Jews without officially associating themselves with any of Cairo's Jewish congregations. Their reticence appears to have stemmed from their inability to find a congregation whose form of religion approximated their own. They were critical of the Talmud-centered Judaism practiced by most Egyptian Jews, but found the local community of Karaites (a sect of non-rabbinic Jews) to be equally foreign. The Egyptian Jews agreed that the Castilians occupied a wholly unfamiliar category of religious belief and practice. Some warned that the Jews should have nothing to do with the new arrivals, while one local Jew offered the novel suggestion that the former Conversos might now convert to Islam, arguing: "For they are originally Christian, and it is best that they belong neither to us [the Rabbanites] nor to *them* [the Christians] nor to *you* [the Karaites]."<sup>78</sup>

This debate was reopened a century later, when a much larger wave of former Conversos began to arrive in Cairo and the rest of the Muslim world. Indeed, the Conversos' reticence to integrate into the local Jewish communities of their adopted homes remained a significant characteristic of these immigrants for centuries, and continued to raise questions among professing Jews regarding their true religious identity.<sup>79</sup> Some fled Portugal merely to live peacefully as Christians beyond the reach of the Holy Office, which began to function there in the late 1530s. Others who left lived as Christians for years in their new homes before eventually returning to Judaism.<sup>80</sup> This was particularly the case in Italy, where some Converso immigrants took advantage of the opportunity to behave publicly as Christians and privately as Jews in an atmosphere of less scrutiny than existed in Portugal. Christian authorities rapidly grew weary of such subterfuge, even in areas noted for relatively liberal policies with regard to Jews, such as Ferrara. There, Duke Ercole d'Este assumed that all Conversos arriving from Portugal were, in fact, Jews, and ordered that they wear the distinguishing yellow mark of the Jewish community.<sup>81</sup> Here, then, we have the peculiar instance of a Christian lord forcibly outing or, in a sense, "re-converting" the descendants of those forcibly converted in 1497.

Even those who reverted openly to Judaism in Muslim lands often found a cold reception from the rest of Jewish society. By the mid-sixteenth century, stories of religious duplicity among the Conversos circulated widely within the Sephardic Diaspora, challenging the pious depictions found in the chronicles of Saba and Ibn Verga. Actual cases of merchants adopting dual

identities while “commuting” between Portugal and lands where their profession of Judaism was acceptable, or between Judaism and Christianity within these lands, appear to have been rare. Nonetheless, a few such instances were enough to color Jewish attitudes and fan the flames of suspicion with regard to Converso piety.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, there is evidence that the Portuguese Jews themselves recognized that their conversion to Christianity, forced or not, had brought an intrinsic change in their religious identity. Upon reverting to Judaism, many former Conversos openly repented for what they understood to be their sins. In Safed, members of the Portuguese community established a special organization to aid in the process of officially wiping clean the stains of conversion through acts of repentance.<sup>83</sup> While such acts no doubt stemmed from personal religious ideals, the public and performative nature of such rituals cannot be overlooked.

As with other matters of religious observance within the Sephardic Diaspora, the concerns of average Jews with regard to Conversos’ religious status often diverged significantly from those of their rabbinic leaders. A primary interest for rabbinic scholars was to defend the sanctity of Jewish law. The question for them was not so much what place former Conversos should hold within the Jewish community, but whether these men and women were required to observe Jewish law in full. By contrast, the concerns of most Mediterranean Jews centered on questions of community. Were these new immigrants who had been raised as professing Christians really Jews in any meaningful, practical sense? Should these former Conversos be allowed to pray among them? Receive honors in the synagogue? Marry their daughters? In their answers to these questions, most Jews were more likely to be guided by personal interest and petty jealousies than by a commitment to legal theory. A case brought before Rabbi David ben Hayyim Ha-Kohen of Patras captures the differences between attitudes and anxieties of the rabbinic elite and those of the average Jew with regard to the Conversos:

The question concerns one of the apostates who left the religion of Israel for idolatry because of the decree of the government of those days which ordered the Jews to change from the religion of Israel to the religion of idolatry [i.e., Christianity]. This apostate was murdered on the road by bandits who gave his flesh to the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the field. The son of the apostate is a Jew, and he desires to say *kaddish*<sup>84</sup> for the soul of his father. However, there are other mourners (in the congregation) whose fathers died as Jews. Do they have precedence in saying the *kaddish*? Or shall we say that, although this mourner’s father was slain while an apostate, he has to say *kaddish* on the same basis as these others.<sup>85</sup>

In his response, Rabbi Ha-Kohen noted that the Converso in question had been killed en route from Portugal to the Ottoman Empire, and since it was clear that his intention had been to rejoin the Jewish community there, he should be considered to have died as a Jew. His son was thus required to mourn him in the traditional manner. The neat legal interpretation of this case could not easily resolve the more complicated social drama set in motion by these events, which was no doubt repeated in a number of Jewish communities around the Mediterranean from the 1530s onward. The Jews of this particular congregation would have continued to argue for their rights to have precedence in mourning their fathers who died openly and unambiguously as Jews, regardless of how their rabbinic leaders viewed the matter. Furthermore, popular suspicions regarding the true motivation behind Converso emigration from Portugal continued to clash with Ha-Kohen's reading of events. Where many legal authorities saw the Conversos' decision to leave Iberia for North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, and even Venice and Livorno as proof of their unwavering dedication to Judaism, Jewish merchants and artisans living in these regions understood this immigration to be shaped by multiple factors. Ha-Kohen's own explanation of this case includes the following:

[This merchant] had come as far as the city of Arta to return to Judaism and was robbed on the road and lost all his money. He therefore returned to Portugal for a while in order to earn more money. Then he was on the way back here to return to Arta when robbers seized him and took all that he had. Thus, there is reason to believe that this poor man did not stay in Portugal out of conviction, but out of duress. His intention was to return to Arta to become a Jew.<sup>86</sup>

Where the rabbi saw the man's decision to leave Christian Portugal for Muslim Arta as evidence of his desire to return to Judaism, the merchant's attention would more readily be drawn to other information in this account. Although the man in question may well have longed to rejoin his family and other Jews in Ottoman lands, his dedication to Judaism was clearly modified by more temporal concerns. Family and faith were important, but so were wealth and social stature, and the Converso merchant had no desire to start a new life as a Jew if it also meant being a pauper. His decision to return to Portugal, the land of "forced idolatry," in order to earn more money recasts this tale of supposed flight to religious freedom in a very different light.

Perhaps of equal importance for the reception of former Conversos into Jewish society was the question of their ethnic identity. As with other

ethnically and geographically constructed Jewish groups during this period, members of the Portuguese “nation” who returned to Judaism elsewhere in Europe or in Muslim lands tended to form congregations with one another, to the exclusion of other Jews. To be sure, much of this was due to the formative experience of their crypto-Jewish past. Yet in many ways this was typical early modern behavior. For the generation brought up in Christian Portugal after 1492, the fact that their homeland was Portugal was as important as the fact that their religious identity was an odd mix of outward Christianity and secret Judaism.<sup>87</sup> For those children of the refugees who arrived in Portugal in 1492 and subsequently came of age there, this kingdom was their new patria. The language and material culture of sixteenth-century Portugal quickly became important elements in establishing social bonds among the nascent *nação* (nation) of Converso merchants, bonds that they retained long after they reverted to the religion of their parents and grandparents.

Thus, Castilian Jews who fled to Portugal in 1492 and from there proceeded directly to North Africa, Italy, or the Ottoman Empire could rejoin the Castilian or “Spanish” congregations in these new areas of settlement with relative ease. Their ties to Jews they had known in Spain remained strong, and they were brought closer through their shared experience of exile, which was still a fresh memory—and still a factor that alienated them from the native Jewries in the cities where they came to live. Such was not the case for those Jews of Castilian heritage who remained in Portugal until the 1530s and only then set out to return to Judaism abroad. For these late-comers, the passage of time and the fraying of ties to their former neighbors and fellow exiles became every bit as significant a barrier to their reestablishment of social and communal ties as was their conversion to Christianity. For those who remained in Portugal until the late sixteenth century or beyond, the challenges of integrating into the now-established *kehalim* of the other descendants of 1492 became increasingly difficult, and in time almost insurmountable.

The religious malleability of the Spanish and Portuguese Conversos, which has become one of their defining characteristics, is usually attributed to their state of religious limbo between Judaism and Christianity. In other words, the Conversos’ place between standard religious communities was a product of external limitations placed upon them. Had they either been allowed to remain Jewish or been more readily accepted into Christian society, it is assumed, they would never have developed such ambivalent attitudes with regard to theology, custom, religious tradition, and authority. There is, of course, a great deal of truth to this argument. However, such an appraisal presumes a relatively high level of religious fidelity and orthodoxy among



those Jews and Christians whose religious identities were *not* in doubt. As we have already seen, such a characterization of religious life in late medieval Iberia is clearly oversimplified. Despite the prevalent modern image of the Middle Ages as a period of deep religiosity and faith, medievals themselves were convinced that their societies were rife with immorality and religious insincerity. Contempt for the lower orders of Jewish society, including their lack of piety, was one of the characteristics of Hispano-Jewish culture that the intellectual elite brought with them into exile.<sup>88</sup> Disrespect for or distrust of self-proclaimed moralists and rabbinic authorities was equally widespread among Jewish merchants, artisans, and the poor.<sup>89</sup> While the Conversos' unique situation no doubt enhanced their tendency to develop hybrid religious practices and beliefs, the characteristics of religious ambivalence and nonconformity with which they are so often associated were already firmly entrenched in Jewish society.

## Conclusion

In a recent study, David Malkiel characterized medieval German Jewry as "a society of mortals, not saints." Malkiel's caveat is one that we would do well to bear in mind for all eras and locales of Jewish history.<sup>90</sup> Jewish religious identity was not synonymous with rabbinic ideology, nor was popular religion a form of defiance, even if it was portrayed as such by some scholars. The simple if perhaps unpalatable truth is that Iberian Jews had a complicated and often combative relationship with both their rabbinic leaders and the strictures of normative Judaism that the latter sought to implement. Like most aspects of Sephardic life in the sixteenth century, this tension was not a product of 1492, but rather a longstanding feature of Hispano-Jewish life that was intensified by the upheaval of the Expulsion and its aftermath. The Sephardim are well known for having overwhelmed the native Jewish communities in which they settled and forced the local Jews to adapt to many of their religious customs.<sup>91</sup> But the image of a Sephardic cultural wave washing over the Jewish communities of the Mediterranean masks an intricate process of accommodation and centralization among the Sephardim themselves.

## Imagining Sepharad

Exilium mors est

—Ovid

The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and the subsequent migration of Conversos from Portugal also mark the beginning of a long process of cultural self-fashioning in which the descendants of the Spanish exile would, over the course of the sixteenth century, create a transnational Hispano-Jewish, or “Sephardic,” society built upon a shared concept of Iberia as a common homeland. By the second half of the sixteenth century, the old rabbinic term Sepharadim was in common use among Mediterranean Jews as a broad reference to Jews of Iberian heritage. Also popular among Jews and non-Jews alike were a host of synonyms (Megorashim, Men of the Nation, Marranos, Portuguese, and Levantines), each of which carried with it a different shade of meaning. However, these terms and the images they invoked remained quite fluid, much like the actual communities and networks of the Sephardim. The exiles of 1492 did not bring with them any concrete sense of an ancestral “Spanish” homeland.<sup>1</sup> Rather, such a notion only evolved over the course of the sixteenth century as the result of three interconnected factors. The first of these was the experience of expulsion and continued migration: The shared set of experiences

that included forced migration, forced conversion, and the array of hardships that these engendered helped to convince the refugees and their descendants that they represented a collective “nation” with a common history. Second, this conflation of recent events and distant history was reinforced by the native Jewries among whom the Sephardim came to settle. For the Greek, Italian, and Mustarab Jews, the defining characteristic of the Sephardim was the massive nature of their migration, which blurred any regional differences and associations that had existed among the Spanish and Portuguese Jews before 1492. In other words, the particular logistical situations and exigencies of life in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean created the conscious recognition of a shared cultural past among the descendants of the Spanish exiles. Third, the image of a distinct Sephardic society was further given shape by a series of chroniclers who probed the meaning of 1492 and the phenomenon of exile within a personal, regional, and general framework of Jewish history.

#### The “Hispanic” Character of Sephardic Culture: A Mediterranean Product?

Viewed from the standpoint of modern Mediterranean history, the popularity of Jewish folktales, ballads, and popular adages about medieval Spain suggest continuity of a pre-Expulsion communal identity. However, such ostensibly “medieval” cultural consciousness must be seen as part of a folk culture that evolved over many centuries after 1492, rather than as evidence of a collective memory inherited from the pre-Expulsion period. We have already traced the long process by which communities that had been based on older regional identities evolved into amalgamated “Sephardic” congregations and networks. As the institutional frameworks of Sephardic society evolved, so too did the corresponding culture. Ironically, it was the distinctly Mediterranean context of the sixteenth century that truly established the Spanish and Portuguese identity of early modern Sephardic culture.

Perhaps the greatest example of Sephardic culture as a product of the post-Expulsion era rather than its medieval predecessor was the development of a shared language. During the late Middle Ages, Iberian Jews spoke forms of Romance vernacular that incorporated vocabulary from Arabic and Hebrew. After 1492, many different microdialects emerged among the Sephardim as they settled throughout the Mediterranean basin.<sup>2</sup> The Judeo-Spanish of the Sephardic Diaspora continued to grow, absorbing Arabic, Italian, and Turkish words, according to region.<sup>3</sup> The exiles of 1492 carried with them a rich tradition of proverbs, songs, and oral folklore that was continually cultivated by their descendants.

The Sephardim referred to their version of Spanish by a variety of terms, including Ladino, Franko, Djudezmo, and Djudyó. As with the terms used to refer to the people of the Sephardic Diaspora, those used for their language encompassed allusions to both their ethnic roots (Ladino, Franko) and their religious identity (Djudezmo, Djudyó).<sup>4</sup> Much like Sephardic social and political institutions, the Spanish of the Sephardic Diaspora also underwent a process of standardization during this period. Indeed, the nature of Sephardic linguistic development closely resembles that of Sephardic communal structures. The dissolution of social ties among many Iberian Jews during the long process of expulsion and relocation accelerated the development of a new and distinct Romance vernacular.<sup>5</sup> The Spanish of the early Sephardic Diaspora combined disparate elements of Romance vocabulary and forms of pronunciation from various parts of Iberia. It preserved some expressions that had since fallen out of use in Iberia, but also created new characteristics as the different yet mutually intelligible varieties of Iberian Romance vernacular were blended together.<sup>6</sup> Sephardic identity and the Judeo-Spanish language that came to function as a *lingua franca* throughout most of the Sephardic Diaspora were mutually constructed. The latter came into being as a practical means of communication among the scattered Jews of Iberian heritage, and eventually became a defining characteristic of the society they created. There was little written in Judeo-Spanish before 1492, but it was used for prayers and sermons, a practice that continued after the Expulsion.<sup>7</sup> During the second and third generations of the Sephardic Diaspora, distinct "Sephardic" melodies took their place in Ottoman synagogues alongside local, Muslim melodies.<sup>8</sup>

The survival and development of Judeo-Spanish was, like many aspects of early Sephardic culture, principally the result of logistical and demographic factors. In areas where Iberian Jews came to predominate, so too did their language. In North Africa, most Sephardim came to adopt the local vernacular due to their relatively small numbers compared to the local Jewish population. Spanish was generally relegated to use by Sephardic diplomats and mercantile elites, a phenomenon that would be repeated with regard to French in later centuries. Though born in Morocco several generations after 1492, the wealthy merchant and courtier Samuel Pallache spoke Spanish due to its continued importance as a diplomatic language in that region.<sup>9</sup> For Pallache and other Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking grandees, it was their ties to Iberia's royal courts that were significant, not their connection to a pre-Expulsion cultural heritage.<sup>10</sup> Similar pragmatic considerations affected newcomers' decisions to adopt local costume, language, or other cultural norms.<sup>11</sup>

The intense mobility of the Sephardim was another important factor in the standardization of Judeo-Spanish among Diaspora communities. By the

close of the sixteenth century, Spanish had emerged as the primary language of commerce among Sephardic Jews, at least for those living in Italy and throughout the eastern Mediterranean. In an inquisitorial deposition given in Pisa in 1600, a Sephardic merchant noted that “not only throughout the Levant, but also in Venice, Ancona, Ferrara and here in Pisa” it was common practice for Jews of Iberian origin to hire tutors to teach their children to read and write Castilian using Hebrew characters.<sup>12</sup> The sermons of itinerant rabbis, which were usually delivered in the vernacular, also aided the promotion of a shared Judeo-Spanish koiné among the various congregations they addressed. In addition to promoting a standardized form of Judeo-Spanish among Jews of Iberian heritage, these preachers also helped to popularize the language among Greek- and Arabic-speaking Jews.<sup>13</sup>

Logistical and demographic issues had an impact on the development of Sephardic language and cultural habits in northern Europe as well. While Conversos who joined preexisting Sephardic communities in the Mediterranean were eventually subsumed into these larger groups, those who settled in France, the Netherlands, and other northern European centers encountered a very different situation. As founders of these Sephardic communities, they could exert a far stronger influence over the local linguistic and cultural development.<sup>14</sup>

Sephardim established printing presses in several Italian and Turkish cities, producing works in Ladino beginning in the sixteenth century. Ladino printed books had a limited impact on the cohesion of Sephardic society during this early period. However, works such as the Ladino versions of the Book of Psalms (Istanbul, 1540) and the Bible (Ferrara, 1553) formed the basis for a Ladino print literature that would become another unifying element of the Sephardic Diaspora over the course of the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> Commenting on the great diversity of languages used by Ottoman-Jewish printers, the French traveler Nicolas de Nicolay noted that Turkish and Arabic were the only languages in which Ottoman Jews did *not* publish.<sup>16</sup> Despite their relatively warm welcome in the Muslim East, it would seem that Jews continued to prefer written works in their traditional literary languages (Hebrew, Aramaic), or in the vernacular of their native lands.

During most of the sixteenth century, the formation of a Sephardic koiné out of the various strands of Judeo-Spanish in use prior to 1492 was still a work in progress. If the Sephardic vernacular of this time had an identifying hallmark, it was precisely its lack of standardization. That is to say, the amalgam of languages acquired by the Sephardim as a result of their constant movement around the Mediterranean—from Castilian and Portuguese to Arabic and Sicilian—became emblematic of Sephardic society.<sup>17</sup>

Christian Spaniards who encountered Sephardim in Muslim lands were surprised that the latter continued to employ a Spanish vernacular that was “as good or better than their own.”<sup>18</sup> In his account of his travels to the Holy Land around 1565, the Portuguese friar Pantaleão de Aveiro wrote of a chance encounter he had at the Shiloah pool outside of Jerusalem, where women of all faiths typically gathered to do their laundry and bathe. The incident occurred when he and his fellow monks went to explore a bathhouse near the pool, but were promptly driven away by a group of women who emerged from the building, shouting at the men in Arabic.<sup>19</sup> Once outside, the monks were approached by one of the women, who saw that they were foreigners and Christians, and engaged them in conversation. It was the language that she employed that helped the monks to identify her as Sephardic. De Aveiro recounts that her language was a mix of Spanish and Italian, which signaled to him that she must be a Jew of Iberian lineage. He writes that his new acquaintance was delighted to hear him reply to her in Castilian, and that they quickly fell into a friendly conversation. De Aveiro asked the woman if she was Jewish, and where she had been born. She replied that she was a Jew from Rosetta, Egypt, but that her family had originally come from Toledo.<sup>20</sup>

It is interesting to note that the woman’s language so clearly marked her as a member of the Sephardic Diaspora. While it might have been relatively routine to come across Turkish, Arab, and Italian merchants or soldiers in the Levant who possessed some knowledge of various Romance languages, it was apparently rare to encounter women with a similar background. Though de Aveiro does not mention it, it is also quite possible that there was something in the woman’s appearance or demeanor that the Portuguese traveler recognized as familiar. If nothing else, the fact that she approached him so openly when the Arabic-speaking women merely shouted for him and his fellow monks not to trespass would also have indicated that there was something novel about this woman. Other European travelers record similar encounters with Sephardim who spoke fondly and with great pride of their Iberian homeland. Like the anonymous woman at the Shiloah pool, these Sephardim often kept alive memories of their family’s association with particular Iberian cities. Jews in Bethlehem were reported to have pined for the city of Seville, not for Spain or Portugal, and in particular for “its meats and savouries,” not for any memory of religious coexistence.<sup>21</sup>

Clothing was another important element that helped set Sephardim apart as a distinct community. It has recently been suggested that the exiles’ continued use of recognizably Iberian clothing in their new homes marked a conscious reappropriation of Iberian cultural norms, despite the fact that the society in question had rejected them.<sup>22</sup> On the one hand, clothing

functioned as a means of distinguishing the Megorashim from Christian Iberia from both the local Toshavim of North Africa and those Jewish exiles from Muslim Granada. On the other hand, as with language, the decision of Spanish Jews to use clothing that they had worn prior to their expulsion was less a conscious expression of cultural affinity than a natural continuation of a cultural norm. The Jews who arrived in North Africa over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries tended to dress just as they had while living in their Iberian cities of origin, minus the Christian-enforced badge.<sup>23</sup> In the absence of pressure from their host society to change their way of living, Jewish exiles followed the most obvious path: They continued to act and present themselves in the manner to which they had become accustomed, altering their habits only slowly and over the course of generations. By the second and third generation of the exile, this distinct clothing helped set them apart as a group that could be identified as “Spanish” or Sephardic.

The association of Sephardic exiles with Iberian culture was reinforced by the waves of Conversos that filtered out of Portugal over the course of the sixteenth century and returned to Judaism in a variety of locales throughout the Mediterranean and northern Europe. These Converso immigrants helped to sustain links to the language and culture of Spain and Portugal among the older generations of Sephardic refugees throughout the Mediterranean. Furthermore, their unique religious experience as a community caught in limbo between nominal Christianity and crypto-Judaism led many of these Conversos to develop an elevated regard for Hispano-Portuguese culture, which they retained long after their return to Judaism. After their forced conversion in 1497, the Portuguese Conversos continued to preserve and promote their Spanish identity as much as they clung, in secret, to their Jewish identity. Those who fled Portugal for the cities of Italy, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire carried with them this cultural pride in their Spanish heritage. While not all Conversos reverted openly to Judaism in these new areas of settlement, they generally presented themselves as members of a Hispano-Portuguese “nation.”<sup>24</sup>

In many European cities, the term “Portuguese” became a derogatory synonym for “Jew,” a development that was not well received by Portuguese Christians.<sup>25</sup> And yet, this phenomenon paralleled a similar process by which these same Portuguese Christians had come to view the religiously suspect Conversos in their kingdom as “Castilians.” Indeed, for much of the first hundred years after the Expulsion, the Spanish identity of those who fled to Portugal was maintained for them by Portuguese Christians for whom the term “originally from Castile” came to mean “Jew” in the much the same way that “Portuguese” would outside of the kingdom. The Castilian identity

of the Portuguese Conversos functioned as a means of excluding them from Portuguese society. When the political union of the Iberian kingdoms in 1580 prompted a wave of Portuguese Converso migration into Spain, these layered identities were altered once again. Those who were marked as “Castilian” (i.e., “foreign”) in Portugal were now marked as “Portuguese” in Castile to the same end.<sup>26</sup> This hybrid cultural identity, which identified the Conversos simultaneously as Spanish and Portuguese, was also common within the Sephardic Diaspora. During the surge in migration of Portuguese Conversos during the mid-sixteenth century, officials in several Italian cities commonly referred to them as “Spaniards from Portugal.”<sup>27</sup>

### Nostalgia and Sephardic Cultural Consciousness

Another contributing factor to the creation of a shared Sephardic culture was the development of a collective longing for the lost world of medieval Iberia. For many refugees, pre-Expulsion Iberia rapidly took on the aura of a sweet homeland where, in the words of one exile, the Jews “had lived as kings.”<sup>28</sup> The temptation to idealize life in medieval Spain is not hard to fathom, especially considering the litany of hardships suffered by the exiles throughout the early sixteenth century. But within a relatively short time these new challenges became a fact of life, and whatever memories or longings the exiles might have had for their native lands in Iberia, the vast majority would have to accept that the refugee community itself—that is, the Sephardic Diaspora—was their new patria.

For the majority of the second and third generation of the exiles of 1492, the pain of the Expulsion had begun to fade and was replaced by the imagined glory of the pre-exilic past. Over the course of the sixteenth century, both the tragedy of 1492 and the rich history that preceded it evolved from memories that were direct and personal into ones that were inherited and collective. Gradually, connections to particular cities and regions that had so dominated Hispano-Jewish identity in the Middle Ages gave way to a more general longing for Spain. At the same time, the Sephardim followed the standard immigrant pattern of blending the older religious customs of their parents with those of their new neighbors to form a new cultural and religious profile.

As it came into being, then, the Sephardic Diaspora began to operate like a living organism, expanding and contracting to include new members, and altering its essence in the process. The intellectual, mercantile, and social networks that developed among the sixteenth-century Sephardim helped to bind them one to another and fostered a general sense of shared identity.



Yet, as is always the case in Jewish history, the identity fashioned by the Sephardim was fundamentally shaped by the different contexts and societies in which they settled. The result was the emergence of several distinct yet overlapping geographical spheres, that is, the Sephardic settlements of the Maghreb, the Italian Peninsula, and the Ottoman Empire,<sup>29</sup> and by the end of the century, the communities of France and the Netherlands established by Portuguese Conversos.

In North Africa, the children and grandchildren of those expelled in 1492 quickly began to forge a new ethno-religious identity based less on the tragedy of exile than on their understanding of the glorious cultural heritage that had preceded it. Their efforts to create a usable past defined by the greatness of pre-Expulsion Jewish civilization was aided by a similar process taking place among Iberia's Muslim refugees. The successive waves of Muslim and Morisco refugees brought with them a concept of Iberia that emphasized the history and culture of al-Andalus, rather than that of the peninsula's Christian kingdoms. In fostering nostalgia for the lost world of Muslim Iberia, the Muslim writer Leo Africanus linked the relatively unexceptional culture of his native Kingdom of Granada to the much older splendors of al-Andalusi society in the early and high Middle Ages.<sup>30</sup> This collapsing of the recent and distant history of al-Andalus also had an impact on Jewish attitudes toward the cultural legacy of the Sephardim. As this association became reinforced over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Sephardim in the Maghreb also began to look past their more recent history in Christian Iberia and to focus instead on their glorious Andalusi heritage.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the ultimate success of Hispano-Jewish culture among the so-called Toshavim of North Africa may owe a great deal to the latter's acceptance of the Iberian newcomers as keepers of an earlier and purer version of the glorious cultural legacy to which both groups considered themselves tied.

As in other regions of the Mediterranean, the cultural fusion between the Sephardic and the local Jews in North Africa was never complete. From the sixteenth century onward, the Maghreb was divided into three distinct zones of Jewish culture: one in the north, in which Jews openly associated themselves with the culture of Spain and Portugal; one in the far south, where Iberian identities did not penetrate; and a middle zone in which the cultures of the Megorashim and Toshavim blended.<sup>32</sup> The presence of Arabic-speaking Jewish refugees from Málaga and Granada facilitated this fusion of Jewish identities. These Jews helped promote a particularly Andalusi form of the Sephardi intellectual tradition that argued for the importance of Arabic language, poetry, and philosophy.<sup>33</sup>

Among the Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire, the same slow process of “national” reinvention helped transform disparate refugee communities into a new Diaspora society of Sephardim.<sup>34</sup> In contrast with the North African milieu, Balkan and Levantine Sephardim emphasized their more recent heritage in Christian Spain and Portugal over their distant roots in Muslim al-Andalus. Generally speaking, it was their Iberian cultural features—including knowledge of firearms, printing, and European languages—that helped them foster mercantile ties to Europe through the ports of Venice, Ancona, Ragusa, and Livorno, thus making them valuable to their Ottoman hosts. Because of this concentration on mercantile expertise, it is not surprising that Salonica, the principal gateway between European and Ottoman markets, rapidly developed into the foremost city of the Sephardic Diaspora.

The establishment of identifiably “Sephardic” communities in the Ottoman Empire during the second and third generation of the Diaspora from Spain brought with it an increased emphasis on Iberia as a common and idealized homeland in the Sephardic imagination. The assertion of a unique and glorious past served the cultural and psychological interests of those who sought to make sense of their parents’ exile in light of their own cultural prominence and social and economic success. In cities where the Sephardim predominated, to associate oneself with any element of Iberian heritage became a means of associating oneself with the ruling elite. In Salonica, where the majority of the city’s population could claim Iberian roots, the popular saying “*Ya basta mi nombre ke es Abravanel!*” (It’s enough that my name is Abravanel!) was employed by many Jews who were neither descendants of that great family of intellectuals nor familiar with their scholarly works.

The mercantile centers of the Italian Peninsula formed the third distinct region of the early Sephardic Diaspora. In the immediate aftermath of 1492, the exiles from different parts of Spain were thrown together, along with those from the Spanish territories of southern Italy. Although the first two generations of the Sephardic Diaspora attempted to maintain their political and cultural distinctiveness, the successive regional expulsions and new invitations for settlement inevitably brought about a certain level of cultural fusion.<sup>35</sup> The role of these cities as general contact zones and crucibles of Sephardic culture continued into the seventeenth century, as the region served as the hub for the Western and Eastern zones of the Sephardic Diaspora.

In addition to Italy’s geographic position between the older Sephardic community of the Mediterranean and the new centers being established in northern Europe, its function as a cultural nexus was further enhanced by

the presence of the new wave of Portuguese Conversos who began to arrive in Italy during the 1530s and 1540s.

The Conversos who ventured into the Mediterranean and northern Europe during the sixteenth century helped reinvigorate the ties of Sephardic Jews to the language, material, and intellectual culture of Christian Iberia. However, many of these Conversos resisted adopting a Sephardic identity that would have more readily linked them with the Jewish exiles of 1492. Referring to themselves alternately as members of a “Portuguese Nation” or as “Hebrews” of the Portuguese Nation, they emphasized the distinct elements of their religious and cultural identity.<sup>36</sup> Those who accepted the term “Ponentines,” in contrast to the “Levantine” Sephardim who had settled in Ottoman lands, continued to promote their association with Iberia and the West and to distinguish themselves from the main body of the Sephardic Diaspora. It might be said that those Sephardim who managed to avoid conversion in their emigration from Iberia saw themselves primarily as Jews, whereas those whose families spent a generation or more as Christians before joining the Sephardic Diaspora saw themselves first and foremost as Iberians, and only secondarily, and in some cases grudgingly, as Jews.

The Sephardic exiles’ sense of their own cultural superiority has become such a well-known feature of their Diaspora that it is worth pausing to offer a few comments on the subject. The celebrated Sephardic mystique—that self-image of the Sephardim as a distinct and perhaps superior community of Jewish merchants and scholars—did not originate with the Sephardim of the sixteenth century. That distinction goes to the Jewish intellectuals of al-Andalus who first began to present their culture as the elite of the post-biblical Jewish world.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, this sense of cultural superiority was encouraged by Hispano-Christian culture of the later Middle Ages. Arguments for the political and cultural superiority of Spain in general, and of Castile in particular, were popular among Castilian intellectuals during the fifteenth century, and Hispano-Jewish writing from this period displays a clear awareness of such rhetorical trends.<sup>38</sup> During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Conversos of Spain and Portugal continued to be exposed to Christian theories of cultural preeminence as well as social and even biological purity. The cultural outlook developed by leading Converso intellectuals who returned to Judaism during the early modern period showed the influence of contemporary Christian debates over lineage and purity of blood. Indeed, to the extent that we can argue for a “Sephardic” attitude of superiority of lineage, it appears to be tied as much to Iberian attitudes of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries as to any ancient Hispano-Jewish tradition.<sup>39</sup>

The collective aspect of Hispano-Jewish identity was often construed narrowly by the Sephardim. In the fifteenth century, Jewish authors drawing upon both older Jewish traditions of genealogical superiority and more recent Castilian arguments on cultural prominence saw these factors as applying to their own community—to Toledo, for instance—and not to the whole of Iberian Jewry.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the question of which members of the Sephardic Diaspora merited full inclusion in the Spanish and Portuguese “nation” remained a subject of debate throughout much of the early modern period.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, if the intellectual elite of the Sephardic Diaspora thought highly of themselves and their own cultural legacy, they can hardly be considered unique in this regard. Ashkenazi, Romaniot, Italian, and Mustarab Jews were similarly proud of their heritage. Whatever sense of cultural superiority that the Spanish refugees carried with them into exile, it was not their haughtiness that led them to dominate native Jewries.<sup>42</sup> Mustarab and Romaniot Jews did not passively allow themselves to be overwhelmed by a deluge of Sephardic refugees. First, not all local Jews were automatically subsumed by the wave of newcomers from Iberia. Many Mediterranean communities remained relatively untouched by the influence of Sephardic immigrants.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, those who did come to adopt elements of Hispano-Jewish culture and ultimately became Sephardic communities were an integral part of the process of “Sephardization.” As non-Iberian Jews joined these communities, they brought with them their own image of the Sephardim, helping to reinforce the identity of the Diaspora as a cohesive cultural group.

### Chronicling Exile

The generation of Jewish authors that lived through 1492 attempted to make sense of the tragic events of the time by weaving them into the long history of tribulations suffered by the Jewish people. For some, this meant creating a memorial to lost lives and displaced communities. The preface to Joseph Ha-Kohen’s chronicle *The Vale of Tears* calls for the book to be read aloud as a memorial on the ninth day of the month of ‘Av, the traditional date of mourning for all moments of terrible destruction in Jewish history.<sup>44</sup> This response formed part of a longstanding Jewish theological framework of sin, repentance, and redemption. Within this traditional structure, such cataclysmic events as the Expulsion of 1492 and the subsequent mass conversion of 1497 were understood to be divine punishment for the collective sins of the Jewish people. Many authors among the first generation of the exile from Spain attributed their plight to their personal and collective transgressions,

particularly their failure to adequately observe the commandments. Those who accepted baptism and returned to Spain in the decades following 1492 continued to cite this reason for their troubles.<sup>45</sup> As part of this penitential discourse, Abraham Saba wrote that the Expulsion was due to the “arrogance and domination that existed in Israel, as though they were living in their own land.”<sup>46</sup> Other leading moralists took the opportunity to condemn the popularity of secular studies such as philosophy and the sciences as paramount among these sins. The great Romaniot rabbi Elijah Capsali rebuked the Spanish Jews, saying that they had “turned to secular studies . . . and abandoned Torah.”<sup>47</sup>

In addition to chastising fellow Jews for their religious shortcomings, Jewish authors also celebrated acts of piety and martyrdom. In his list of stories of individual tragedies suffered by Jews in the wake of the Expulsion, Solomon ibn Verga pauses to offer the observation: “The Jews did not wait for their own deaths, and each was occupied with his own distress, not noticing the distress of his fellows.”<sup>48</sup> A similar sentiment can be found in the writing of Abraham Zacuto, who noted:

The conditions prevailing in our time, when we have witnessed saintly men take their own lives and those of their children in order to save them from being forced to abandon the religion of their God, make it fitting to state clearly that this act is not only permissible but is a holy act.<sup>49</sup>

Joseph Yavetz also extolled the piety of those who choose death over conversion, crediting the community’s women as the true source for this act of faith:

For it was the Spanish women who persuaded their husbands to martyr themselves for God, blessed be He, while those who prided themselves on their wisdom exchanged their glory on the bitter day; and this is mighty proof that had they not sought after wisdom, but remained among the simple, their simplicity would have saved them, for God preserveth the simple [Ps. 116:6].<sup>50</sup>

But perhaps the greatest leitmotif that runs throughout the various literary responses to the Expulsion is the idea that the cataclysmic events of the 1490s were signals that the time of messianic redemption was near.<sup>51</sup> Considering the regularity of forced conversion and other forms of persecution suffered by Jews from the fourteenth century onward, it is perhaps not surprising that messianic speculation became a popular theme of Mediterranean Judaism long before 1492, and continued long afterward.<sup>52</sup> Major historical

events such as the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453 were understood as part of this preexisting eschatological framework and helped fuel a wave of messianic speculation among Iberian Jews and Conversos.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the fall of Constantinople had a greater impact on the Hispano-Jewish imagination than the voyage of Columbus forty years later. In 1464, the Castilian Converso Juan de Baena remarked: "If God will favor us, that is, Conversos, the Turk will be in Castile within a year and a half. . . . The Turk is called the Destroyer of Christianity and the Defender of the Jewish Faith. He is the Messiah whose coming is predicted by the Jewish Bible."<sup>54</sup>

The various ways in which the other refugees responded to this increased messianic fervor reflects the multifaceted nature of the early Sephardic Diaspora. As the major calamities that befell the Jews proliferated over the course of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, calls to hasten the advent of the messianic age became increasingly loud in some circles. Yet such statements often prompted rebukes by other Jewish leaders who saw them as potentially destabilizing ideas in an already difficult social and political climate.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, many Jewish authors of the period were less interested in promoting a radical shift in religious behavior than in memorializing the destruction of Iberian Jewry and consoling its Diaspora.<sup>56</sup> A clue as to how the Sephardic readers understood the messianic allusions of these authors can be found in the writing of Isaac ben Abraham Akrish, an exile from Iberia who went to Naples and then spent the much of his life traveling the Mediterranean. He notes:

For although I have seen Prester John's letter and the *Travels of Rabbi Benjamin* [of Tudela] and the *Book of Eldad the Danite*, which are in print, and the tale of the Reubenite as told in Rabbi Joseph Ha-Kohen's chronicle, we can say that these are but inventions made up to fortify depressed hearts.<sup>57</sup>

Other hints that the use of messianic imagery in these chronicles was as much a rhetorical flourish as a belief that the end of days was soon to arrive can be found in an addendum to the works themselves. In the preface to Joseph Ha-Kohen's *Chronicle of the Kings of the Franks and of the Ottoman Turkish Sultans*, his son-in-law notes:

Whosoever desires to find delight in times past, let him take up this chronicle when his sleep hath left him, let him read it,<sup>58</sup> for therein he shall see the matter of the king of the nations and the end of our captivity. Perhaps he will be favored to discern between greatness of the heathen kings, and that of our Messiah. And so he will give thanks to God, that He hath not

taken His mercy from us, giving us a ready scribe, a writer of the Chronicles of our nation.

Here, the allusion to the messiah and the end of days is presented far less seriously than in the kabbalistic works that circulated at the time. The suggestion that the book might prove entertaining for those who are unable to sleep also suggests that these chronicles were presented as popular diversions. Indeed, contemporary discussions of the Expulsion from Spain and its aftermath show a general awareness that the act of writing such chronicles was somewhat frivolous. Excuses for not having pursued more serious matters, such as the study of sacred texts, were a common theme in these works. Elijah Capsali offers a similar explanation for writing such chronicles, rather than dedicating himself to more pious activities. Having decided to compose his history of the Turks (and Jews) as a way of passing time during an outbreak of plague, he explains:

Because our thoughts are perturbed by the pestilence that rages in the darkness and the destruction that wastes us at noon we are prevented from studying Talmudics and other subjects that require great concentration. Because every day we say: what will be our end? . . . Therefore have I written this history, which comes from the mouths of old and wise men, in order that we should be occupied in reading and writing it, and that our minds be diverted to other things, and that we may live and not die, and that the land be not desolate.<sup>59</sup>

Capsali portrayed the rise of the Ottomans as a divinely orchestrated miracle, and thus a harbinger of the coming messianic era.<sup>60</sup> However, he also presented the Ottoman sultans and their deeds as part of the historically unfolding human drama of the age.

The literate Jewish merchants who formed the foundation of most congregations were more likely to read popular works such as these chronicles than they were a tractate of Talmud, a fact of which the chroniclers and their publishers were no doubt well aware. This tendency appears to have been particularly strong among the former Conversos whose Christian education included the Hebrew Scriptures, but not the Talmud and its commentaries. The introduction to a sixteenth-century edition of an older Jewish chronicle (*Sefer Yosippon*) suggests that the book will find a ready audience of “merchants who are immersed in temporal successes, and who have not turned to Torah in their leisure.”<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Solomon ibn Verga noted that his decision to compose a chronicle of Jewish and general world history was inspired by the custom of

the Christians, who “seek to know the things that happened of old in order to take counsel from them, and because of their distinction and enlightenment.”<sup>62</sup>

Ibn Verga’s mention of the chronicles as a source of counsel is noteworthy. In addition to acting as memorials to lost communities, pleas for divine forgiveness, and a form of literary diversion, the various Jewish accounts of the Expulsion that circulated during the sixteenth century also contained practical advice for negotiating the turbulent waters of exile. Thus, while the general context for Joseph Ha-Kohen’s *The Vale of Tears* is the larger exile of the Jews from their ancestral homeland, his primary goal is to address the particular issues confronting the beleaguered Jews of the sixteenth century.

Ha-Kohen was a physician born in southern France in 1496, as his family fled from Iberia to Italy. There can be no doubt that the exile of the Jews from Spain and France loomed large in Ha-Kohen’s mind. At one point in his narrative, he lists these expulsions as the catalysts for his decision to compose the book: “This exile from France and the above named fatal and terrible banishment from Spain have prompted me to compose this book so that later generations of Israel may know how we have been treated in their lands, in their courts, and in their castles.”<sup>63</sup> As for so many Jews of his generation, Ha-Kohen’s life continued to be shaped by the repercussions of these two expulsions. He experienced the pain of exile first hand, enduring two expulsions from the city of Genoa—in 1515 and again in 1550—and witnessed violent attacks against his relatives.<sup>64</sup>

These experiences moved Ha-Kohen to go beyond heartfelt elegies and to offer what he saw to be important lessons on how to endure the difficult times in which he lived. Like his contemporary, Solomon ibn Verga, Ha-Kohen promoted the image of a righteous Gentile king as the key to Jewish survival and security. This is more than a passing observation or a theological argument meant to preserve the traditional Jewish veneration of royal authority in both Jewish and Gentile history. On the contrary, the combination of Gentile protection and the vigilance and selflessness of Jewish mediators represents the key to Ha-Kohen’s message of consolation. It is, he argues, the principal way in which Jews have always survived the vagaries of life in exile. Throughout his account of contemporary events, Ha-Kohen offers examples in which the figure of the Christian ruler appears not as the persecutor of the Jews, but as their protector. These include Ferdinand II of Aragon’s decision to allow the Jews of Navarre to pass safely through his territory, Henry II of France’s permission to Jewish merchants to do business in his dominions, and the benevolent treatment of the Jews by the Duke of Mantua.<sup>65</sup>

No ruler was a greater source of sorrow for the Jews of that time than Pope Paul IV, whose restrictions on Jewish settlement and attacks on their religious



practice were felt throughout the Italian Peninsula. Upon the pope's death, Ha-Kohen notes that the leaders of the Jewish community of Rome went to pay their respects to his successor, Pius IV. They presented their grievances regarding how they had been treated by the former pope and were given promises of friendship and protection. This passage is immediately followed by one in which the Jewish leaders of Pavia secured a similar guarantee of protection from the senators of Milan in 1560.<sup>66</sup> The mention of such covenants accompanies several of these accounts in which Jews are able to avoid expulsion. Throughout his chronicle, Ha-Kohen repeatedly stresses the importance of legal guarantees as a key to Jewish security. Paramount to his vision of Jewish history was his concern for reliable Jewish leadership that could be counted on to guide the community through troubled times.<sup>67</sup> As a leading member of Genoese Jewry active in ransoming Jews throughout the Mediterranean, Ha-Kohen had the opportunity to play the role of earthly savior himself. In his treatise, a wise Jewish leader's success depended upon that of the benevolent Gentile king, and throughout *The Vale of Tears* he is careful to preserve the images of both as keys to the survival of the Jews in exile. Although his long catalog of persecutions was meant to commemorate *all* Jews who had suffered from exile, his central message was one of hope. No matter how bad the situation might have seemed, Ha-Kohen emphasized that others had endured worse and survived. If the Gentile world had continually conspired to torment and oppress the Jews, God had allowed them to survive and endure this persecution through the intercession of just and capable leaders.

While Ha-Kohen openly championed the swift arrival of messianic redemption, his primary theme was a far more modest reiteration of what had become the essential formula for Jewish survival: to put faith in Jewish courtiers and the centralizing authorities whom they served. Indeed, the notion of an impending messianic age had never answered the question of how, in the meantime, Jews were supposed to live. The sober pragmatism of Ha-Kohen's account demonstrates an earnest concern with the daily struggles presented by life in exile. Two of the extant manuscripts of *The Vale of Tears* end with depictions of effective Jewish courtiers and honorable, protective lords. In one, the Jews of Savoy are saved from expulsion by the intercession of an unnamed Jewish physician who is able to negotiate a contract with the Duke. The passage ends:

The Jews, in their horror, cried out to the Lord who offered them a certain physician, a juror of the Ducal Court. He spoke well of the Jews to the Duke, and thereupon the Duke entered into a covenant with them. They live there now, to this very day.<sup>68</sup>

Another manuscript copy ends with the story of a physician who comes to save the Jewish community of Venice:

A few days thereafter, the Physician, Rabbi Solomon, went to Venice on the orders of his master, Selim, and negotiated there with the Senators about the treaty which had been made with them and which they confirmed by bestowing great honor upon him. And the Jews also hastened to do him honor, gave him a reception, and congratulated him for all his help. After Solomon had discussed all the essentials with the Senators of the city, he bid them farewell, bowed, and withdrew in peace to return to his master.<sup>69</sup>

This passage is a microcosm of the book's principal themes. First, though Christians conspire to persecute and expel the Jews, expulsion is avoided through the efforts of a capable Jewish intercessor. In the grand tradition of Sephardic courtiers, the intercessor is a learned Jew, a physician-rabbi who is at home in the diplomatic circles of Muslim and Christian alike. So successful is he that the same senators who had previously decided to rid Venice of its Jews bestow great honor upon him. As with his account of the Jews of Milan, Ha-Kohen gives the Jews of Venice a pivotal role in the affairs of the republic, as the treaty depends on the figure of a Jewish intermediary. His depiction of the grateful Jews of Venice honoring this courtier also sends a clear message to fractious fellow Jews, and with good reason. For those Jews born after 1492, the metaphysical impact of the Expulsion was not as pressing a concern as the need to secure places to live and work. Throughout the sixteenth century, the ongoing search for Jewish settlement rights and guarantees of protection hinged on precisely the sorts of intercessions by Jewish courtiers that play such a prominent role in Ha-Kohen's chronicle.<sup>70</sup>

Do these various chronicles and accounts of the Expulsion represent a particularly Sephardic cultural consciousness that emerged after 1492? Perhaps. Yet, even the authors who clearly saw the tribulations they suffered in collective terms had varying perspectives on what constituted the Sephardic exile. Each author viewed the seminal events of 1492 and 1497 and the attendant subjects of exile and loss through the prism of his own circumstances and experiences. Some understood these tragedies as part of a general Jewish chain of tradition. Others saw the Expulsion of 1492 as unique in its scope, comparable only to the great exile of the Jewish people from their ancient homeland. Isaac Abravanel wrote: "As for the Jews, when they heard the decree they all mourned, and wherever the news of the king's word and order was heard, the Jews despaired, and all feared greatly, a fear unequaled since the exile of Judah from its land to a foreign land."<sup>71</sup>

Even those authors who singled out 1492 as a distinct and collective tragedy of Iberian Jewry did not agree on what exactly constituted the “Sephardic” world. An anonymous poet who witnessed the sack of Oran by the Spanish in 1509 wrote an elegy in which he saw the suffering of the Jews at that time as part of a particular Sephardic fate. However, his image of the Sephardic Diaspora was limited to the North African context, making no mention of events in Italy or the Ottoman Empire. In his list of the sufferings endured, the poet included the events of 1391, 1492, and 1497 together with Muslim violence in North Africa. In particular, he cites “a well-known enemy from Meghila [who] killed the houses of Gorerin and Ta’uti and desecrated the house of Him who is terrible in His doing. And after him arose an enemy in the Dar’a and destroyed the whole house of prayer, and they also imposed upon them laws wicked and hard and without pity.” The poet here refers to the Maghrebi attacks during the fifteenth century, namely the uprisings in Fez and their aftermath, as well as the riots instigated by the Muslim cleric Muhammad al-Maghili against the Jews of Tu’at in the 1480s. Our anonymous poet thus combined the suffering of the Iberian Megorashim with that of the local Toshavim among whom they had settled.<sup>72</sup>

For Converso writers, the Sephardic Diaspora they sought to address was not limited by geography as much as by experience. For those Jews subjected to the Portuguese conversions of 1497, this event was seen as *the* defining tragedy of the age and juxtaposed with the relatively easy life the Jews had enjoyed in Spain.<sup>73</sup> Samuel Usque’s *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel*, first published in Ferrara in 1553, was a chronicle whose broad message of consolation masks a more narrowly conceived purpose. Written in elegant literary Portuguese and dedicated to Usque’s principal benefactor, Doña Gracia Nasi, this treatise was aimed at the Portuguese Converso community and not all Sephardim, much less all of “Israel.” Usque not only sought to situate the plight of his beleaguered brethren within the long chain of calamities suffered by the Jewish people, he also meant to convince the ambivalent among them to return openly and permanently to Judaism. Works such as the *Consolation* and Isaac Cardoso’s *Las excelencias de los Hebreos* were not parting shots at an old and despised enemy. They were polemical arguments meant to win the hearts and minds of Conversos who either had yet to revert or had returned to Judaism with, as it seemed to many, a less-than-full measure of devotion. The religious conviction of the Iberian exiles remained a preoccupation for leading intellectuals and amateur disputants throughout the sixteenth century, and for Portuguese *nação* who came to settle in northwest Europe, well into the seventeenth.<sup>74</sup>

Two separate themes of identity, the personal and the collective, are interwoven in the Sephardic chronicles of the late fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries. In both the full chronicles and the short elegies composed at this time, the larger history of the Jewish people and the many afflictions it had endured vie with a more personal theme of suffering. Abraham Arduziel added his own life's story to Abraham ibn Daud's larger chronicle *Sefer Ha-Kabbalah*, which by the fifteenth century had become a classic and treasured piece of Hispano-Jewish literature. Fellow chroniclers Gedaliah ibn Yahya and Joseph Ha-Kohen also inserted histories of their illustrious families within their larger chronicles of the Jewish people.<sup>75</sup>

In the preface to his *Chronicle of the Kings of France and of the Ottoman Turkish Sultans*, Joseph Ha-Kohen boasts: "The chroniclers ceased in Israel, they ceased, until I, Joseph, did arise, until I did arise, a chronicler in Israel." Yosef Yerushalmi interpreted this declaration as evidence that the practice of writing history was generally foreign to medieval Jews.<sup>76</sup> However, when placed alongside similar claims of intellectual or literary virtuosity from this period, Ha-Kohen's statement appears to be a rhetorical flourish. While clearly concerned with the fate of their fellow Jews, the Sephardic chroniclers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were also quick to assert the unique position that they and their families had within the broader Jewish and Sephardic world.

The reading of the Expulsion as both personal and communal tragedy can be seen in a famous poem written by Judah Abravanel in 1503. Even as he touches upon the fate of Sephardic culture, Abravanel does so within the context of his own family's lineage. The poem is presented as an open letter to his son, Isaac, the namesake of Judah's famous father. Sent to Portugal in 1492, the boy was trapped there and subjected to the forced conversion of 1497. The poem offers a detailed description of the intellectual heritage that Judah was unable to pass on to his missing son.<sup>77</sup>

Throughout the poem, the classic division between Jews and non-Jews remains clearly marked, and Abravanel characterizes his exile as that of a faithful Jew made to wander through a hostile Christian world. He laments that he is forced to "roam among the Edomites, nation of the flames" while his son remains captive among "an unclean folk." Yet his Jewish identity and the fact that his fate is bound up with his fellow exiles are merely the background against which his personal tragedy unfolds. The great tradition of Hispano-Jewish scholarship is presented as a personal, not collective, inheritance. He instructs his son: "Know that you descend from scholars, men with minds developed to the point of prophecy. Wisdom is your heritage, so do not waste your boyhood, precious boy." In writing this, the great scholar has in mind a very particular family legacy. For Abravanel, the true casualty of Expulsion and conversion is the intellectual achievement of his family, not

that of Iberian Jewry. In a telling section of his extended lament, the grieving father cries out:

To whom will I hand on my scholarship?  
 To whom can I pour the nectar from my vines?  
 Who will taste and eat the fruit of all my learning, of my books, when  
     I am gone?  
 Who will penetrate the mysteries my father put into his sacred books?  
 Who will slake his thirst and my father's well?  
 Who will drink at all in this time of drought?  
 Who will pluck the blooms of my garden,  
 hew and harvest my own wisdom's tree?  
 Who will take my undone works in hand?  
 Who will weave my writings' woof and warp?  
 Who will wear the emblem of my faith when once I die?  
 Who will mount my mule and ride my coach?—  
 Only you my soul's delight, my heir, the pledge for everything I owe to  
     God.

My splendid skills are yours by right, my knowledge,  
 and the science that has gotten fame from me.  
 Some of it my mentor, my own father, bequeathed to me—a scholar's  
     scholar he;  
 the rest I gained by struggling on my own,  
 subduing wisdom with my bow and sword, plumbing it with my mind.

Christian scholars are grasshoppers next to me.  
 I've seen their colleges—they've no one who can best me in the duel of  
     words.  
 I beat down any man who stands against me,  
 crush and hush my opponent, prove him wrong.  
 Who but me could dare to tell the mysteries  
 of the Creation, of the Chariot, of its Rider?  
 My soul excels, surpasses all of my contemporaries in this wretched  
     age.<sup>78</sup>

Like all of the chroniclers of the Spanish Expulsion, Judah Abravanel mourned the collapse of Hispano-Jewish society from his own particular vantage point. In time, other members of the Sephardic Diaspora would take Abravanel's sentiments as their own. His personal sense of displacement,

suffering, and loss was expanded into an expression of collective loss and longing. The recognition of the Sephardim that they comprised a unique subculture within the Jewish world was expanded and reinvented in different parts of the Sephardic Diaspora at various junctures, up until the present day. Successive generations of Jews articulated a nostalgic view of a glorious medieval past from the time of the Spanish Expulsion onward.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

The cohesion of the Sephardic world grew steadily over the course of the sixteenth century. Initially, the émigrés clung to the language, customs, and material culture that had been the norm for them in their particular cities before they were expelled. As time went on, they and their descendants wove these elements into a cultural tapestry to which they added elements from the surrounding societies in which they came to live. As the Sephardic Diaspora took shape, the notion of a shared cultural identity offered a means to bind together the Sephardic communities of the Mediterranean and, eventually, the Converso communities of northern Europe. During this process, pre-Expulsion Iberia began to function as an idealized homeland, a marker of communal identity and the centerpiece of their cultural patrimony.

The penitential postures assumed by many Jewish writers in the wake of 1492 can easily be situated within the prevailing trends of late medieval religious thought. The tendency to read the tumultuous events of their age as a mix of divine punishment for the Jewish people's sins and signposts to a coming messianic age was a natural outgrowth of longstanding rabbinic concepts about their place in the world. For those intellectuals already steeped in philosophical and mystical texts, the exile became "remembered" in eschatological and kabbalistic terms. For others, the Expulsion became the muse for their own, personal stories, a chance to memorialize or console a particular sector of the Sephardic world. The sixteenth-century chroniclers intertwined these heartfelt sentiments of loss and displacement with more temporal concerns. In recording the difficulties of life of the Jewish people, both ancient and recent, these authors reiterated the longstanding wisdom of how best to navigate the treacherous seas of exile.

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## Conclusion

The Expulsion of 1492 was the culmination of a long series of large-scale expulsions that drove the Jews out of Latin Christendom. After decades of continued expulsion and migration, the majority of Iberian Jews ultimately came to settle in Muslim lands, where they continued their legacy of economic and cultural achievement. From this perspective, it is perhaps natural to view their transition from the medieval to the early modern period, and from Iberia to the broader Mediterranean world, through a juxtaposition of Christian and Muslim attitudes toward the Jews. In turn, such questions of interfaith dynamics on the eve of modernity inevitably bring to mind debates about contemporary relations among these communities. Does the exclusion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal and their subsequent welcome in the Ottoman Empire make a broader statement about the treatment of minorities in Christian and Muslim societies? Can we draw conclusions about the relative failures of the nation-state to integrate minority groups as compared to heterodox and multi-ethnic empires? Should we see the Jews as a naturally “Oriental” or Middle Eastern people, and if so, does the transference of the



last great Jewish community of medieval Europe represent something of a homecoming? How we answer such questions reflects the way in which we understand the place of the Jews in the modern and postmodern, or postcolonial, world.<sup>1</sup>

Portraits of the Sephardim that resist easy definitions, or that emphasize personal motivations over collective fate, have not been readily embraced, and perhaps that is understandable. The neat binaries of West and East, and of a persecuting and excluding Europe juxtaposed against a tolerant and welcoming Ottoman Empire, and above all the image of the Jews as a unified group devoted to the preservation of Judaism are themes that lend themselves to popular dissemination. And yet, to ignore or devalue the inherent contradictions and conflicts of Sephardic society is to miss something of the humanity of these people, for it is with the recognition of their most human qualities—their dedication to self-preservation, their resourcefulness and flexibility—that their stories become the most universal.

This book began with the assertion that the Expulsion of 1492 marks not only the death of one of the most celebrated Jewish societies of the Middle Ages, but also, and perhaps equally importantly, the birth of something new. The story of the formation of Sephardic Diaspora and the long and difficult resettlement of Iberian Jewry in the lands of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean offers us valuable insights into the essential nature of Jewish communal organization and the self-fashioning of communal identities. Key to a better understanding of these issues is the recognition that they transcend the question of the Jews' political and religious relationships to their host societies. Although outside forces determined the general contours of Jewish society, the primary challenges to executing the rabbinic ideal of autonomous government came from within. In many ways, this communal volatility was a central feature of Hispano-Jewish life that carried over into its diaspora. The autonomy of local oligarchies that predominated among the separate Jewries of Spain in the fifteenth century were preserved by the first generation of exiles and, to a lesser extent, by their children. Throughout the sixteenth century, the nearly perennial migration of so many Jews and the political instability it caused continued to erode dynastic power among many Mediterranean Jewish communities. The result was that new bonds formed among the Jews of Iberian heritage and those of other regions. These encounters between native and newcomer took place time and again as Jews moved throughout the Mediterranean, and were often governed by mutual wariness. Even among the refugees themselves, the formation of Sephardic communities was neither immediate nor organic. Despite the religious and cultural heritage they shared, the social and political organization of the Sephardic

Diaspora was fraught with difficulties. That these Jews did not come together easily or naturally to form communities, and that these migrants and their would-be leaders continued to view each other with suspicion and contempt even after their communities took root, are features of Jewish society that should not be overlooked.

Negotiations of power and authority within the emerging Sephardic Diaspora—between rabbis and communal officials, and between those groups and the Jews they sought to govern—represent central themes of Jewish history that link the medieval and modern periods. So too was the persistence of religious and cultural borrowing among Jews of different regional backgrounds, as well as between Jews and their Christian and Muslim neighbors, a characteristic of medieval Jewish society that continued to shape the contours of the Sephardic Diaspora in its formative century.

The transregional society that arose out of these repeated encounters was characterized by a host of apparent contradictions. It was a society whose members exhibited a resilient dedication to Judaism, but not always to the normative Judaism of their rabbis. They routinely turned to one another for political, economic, and social support, but maintained a strong tendency toward personal independence. They created a new language and forged a new ethnic identity, but read these cultural markers as part of shared cultural heritage that contributed to a nostalgic image of the past.

Amid this internal factionalism and dissent, a cultural identity began to take hold throughout the Sephardic Diaspora. This process of cultural and communal rapprochement, which took place over the course of several generations, was aided by a number of factors, including intermarriage among distinct Jewries; the general process of cultural consolidation of immigrants in a new land; and the self-confidence of the Spanish Jews, which allowed them to successfully assert their cultural dominance over other Jewish groups. This ethnic amalgamation was soon followed by the emergence of clear regional subsets within the Sephardic Diaspora, as the cultural character of Maghrebi, Ottoman, Italian (primarily Livornese), and northern European (primarily Dutch) Sephardim was increasingly influenced by each group's distinct regional situation.<sup>2</sup> But the sense of belonging to a translocal Sephardic society was never fully lost.

Writing on religion as a mode of social organization, historian Bruce Masters notes: "Religion was at least the primary basis of identity, beyond family, clan or gender, for members of most of the Ottoman period. If for no other reason than that was their core identity mandated by state, law, and tradition."<sup>3</sup> This astute observation offers an important evaluation of the role played by religion in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean.

However, my analysis of the early years of the Sephardic Diaspora suggests a possible reordering of Masters's statement. I have argued that, despite the obviously central role played by religious identity in organizing Ottoman (and, indeed, all of Mediterranean) society, we should not ignore the limitations of religious identity and communal institutions in the governance of daily life—particularly for communities that were as peripatetic and internally contested as that of Sephardic Jews. It is precisely in such cases that ethnicity, family, and gender become instructive. The Sephardim of the sixteenth century drew upon these categories of identity to construct networks that were particularly responsive to the various demands of the age.

The Sephardic Diaspora also developed amid a shifting relationship between Jews and non-Jews. For Christians and Muslims alike, sixteenth-century Jews continued to be defined religiously. At the same time, however, Jews in general, and those of Iberian heritage in particular, were increasingly viewed as Spaniards and Portuguese, Levantines and Ponentines. The willingness to place the Sephardim beyond traditional religious categories was bound up with a number of factors, from Sephardic efforts to direct attention away from their religious status to mercantilist tendencies to subordinate religious concerns to those of the marketplace. But perhaps most influential of all were the far-reaching effects of the mass conversions of 1391 and 1497.

The Converso phenomenon hopelessly blurred the lines between Christian and Jewish society and created an anxiety over religious identity that represents one of the most important and enduring legacies of the Jewish presence in medieval Iberia. The nascent fear that Judaism was perhaps an inherent and permanent trait, and thus not a conscious choice that could be manipulated by external influence, would lead many Christians throughout Europe to form new attitudes toward the Jews during the sixteenth century. Similarly, the intricate bonds between Jews and Conversos, soon to be reinforced by events in Portugal, meant that the future Sephardic Diaspora was destined to become a bifurcated one in which the two groups often intersected and overlapped with one another.

The relationship between Jews and their neighbors was also shaped by the prevailing political and economic conditions of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean. Christian attitudes and policies regarding the Jews, including programs of mission, inquisition, and exclusion, persisted throughout the sixteenth century, but were often set aside due to political and economic realities of the day. If Spaniards or Portuguese of any background could be convinced to risk their lives to fight Muslim attackers in North Africa, few in this hostile territory were willing to give more than a passing thought to their religious beliefs. Merchants and travelers of all faiths often echoed this self-serving pragmatism. The

rapidly shifting fortunes of nations and individuals in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean caused those who moved throughout the region to constantly reconsider the nature and value of their religious counterparts.

Nor was Muslim treatment of Jews solely determined by the long-standing legislation concerning *dhimmi*. Rather, that code was alternately upheld or ignored as it suited individual Muslim rulers. In order to gauge the image of the Jew in the Muslim world at this time, it is perhaps best to emphasize the contextual nature of the Muslim-Jewish relationship. In the sixteenth century, Muslim attitudes toward the Jews were as contingent upon the relative power and social status of particular individuals as were those of their Christian counterparts. Turks and Arabs who reached positions of power differed from those who competed with Jews for social and economic success. Al-Maghili's failed attempt to destroy Moroccan Jewry during the latter half of the fifteenth century<sup>4</sup> does not show the triumph of one attitude over another as much as it does the persistence of a variety of attitudes and levels of acceptance or antagonism toward Jews within Muslim society at any given time. Moreover, when the men and women of the Sephardic Diaspora did interact with their Muslim and Christian neighbors, it was not always as "Jews," per se, but often as individuals—plaintiffs, business partners, and rivals, civil servants and refugees. Inviting as it may be to compare relative levels of tolerance toward Jews between Christian and Muslim societies, it is important to bear in mind that none of these groups was monolithic.

As time and migration erased the bonds and direct memories of life in Spain, an "imagined community" of sorts arose among the Sephardim. Unlike the modern nations discussed by Benedict Anderson, and unlike the Jewish Diaspora writ large, early modern Sephardim did not promote an image of their shared and unique destiny.<sup>5</sup> Rather, their sense of community was based on their understanding of a common past, not a future. The evolving awareness of a shared cultural heritage among the Sephardim was as much the product of shared experience of expulsion and migration as it was an expression of ethnic identity. What the average Sephardim and their chroniclers shared most was a sense of rupture, displacement, and suffering. This collective recognition of loss formed the foundation for the emergence of a unifying Sephardic culture, and of the Sephardic identity that would be projected onto the medieval past. The Sepharad it evoked was a land and a community born of nostalgia, a longing for a better time, whether or not such a time ever actually existed. As regular contact with Iberia waned, so too did older local and regional affinities, the parochial identities that separated Toledans, Zaragozaans, and Valencians.

In an abstract sense, Sephardic identity gave meaning to their lives. Their imagined community and the nostalgic view of a shared homeland that went with it gave them a sense of communal pride and even superiority. In a more functional sense, it allowed them to organize into local congregations and transnational networks that transcended older, outmoded categories of patria. These new durable communal structures succeeded in preserving this cultural identity for centuries.

The Iberian kingdoms of the Middle Ages were reconceived as their homeland, and their medieval community as one of great wealth, piety, and towering intellectual achievement. The merchants and artisans of the Sephardic Diaspora—both those of Iberian heritage and those who had become subsumed by Sephardic society—eagerly adopted the cultural patrimony of elites such as the Abravanel and Nasi clans, taking the fame and cultural achievements of these great families as their own. Of course, the social, intellectual, and religious differences that had always distinguished the various elements of Hispano-Jewish society endured. But the Sephardim took solace in their sense of resilience, and the memory—however imaginary it may have been—of better days. To declare oneself to be Sephardic was to lay claim to all the suffering of exile, and all the cultural achievements of Iberian Jewry. Many would declare: “Ya basta mi nombre ke es Abravanel!”

# Notes

## INTRODUCTION

1. Yosef H. Yerushalmi's *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971) remains the most insightful articulation of this approach. More recent presentations of 1492 as an unmitigated tragedy for the Jews include Haim Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Oxford, UK: Littman Library, 2002); and Joseph Pérez, *The History of a Tragedy: The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).
2. S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 6 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967–93).
3. Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: The Commercial Realignment of the Peninsula* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 108–11. Contacts between some Hispano-Jewish merchants and Jews of other Mediterranean territories persisted throughout the thirteenth century, as in the case of Jewish merchants in Barcelona and Alexandria, Egypt. Still, these contacts were relatively limited and declined sharply after 1391. See Yom Tov Assis, “The Jews of Barcelona in Maritime Trade with the East,” in *The Jew in Medieval Iberia, 1100–1500*, ed. Jonathan Ray (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 176–222.
4. Henri Bresc, “La Sicile médiévale, terre de refuge pour les juifs: migration et exil,” *Al-Masaq* 17 (2005): 31–46; Joseph Hacker, “Links Between Spanish Jewry and Palestine,” in *Vision and Conflict in the Holy Land, 1391–1492*, ed. Richard I. Cohen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 111–39; Ben Zion Dinur, “A Wave of Emigration from Spain to the Land of Israel after the Persecutions of 1391” [in Hebrew], *Zion* 32 (1967): 161–74; and Nadia Zeldes, “Spanish Attitudes toward Converso Emigration to the Levant in the Reign of the Catholic Monarchs,” *Eurasian Studies* 2 (2003): 251–71.
5. Heinz Schilling, *Early Modern European Civilization and Its Political and Cultural Dynamism* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2008), 35–41. For Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe, see Bernard Dov Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973), 17–27.
6. Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), esp. chap. 3.
7. On Jewish migration in the early modern period, see David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 23–55.
8. David Abulafia, “Ferdinand the Catholic and the Kingdom of Naples,” in *Italy and the Mediterranean Powers: The Impact of War, 1503–1530*, ed. Christine Shaw (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 129–58; and David Abulafia, “Sugar in Spain,” *European Review* 16 (2008): 191–210.
9. John Francis Guilmartin, *Gunpowder and Galleys: Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare at Sea in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974).
10. On the Genoese in Seville, see Ruth Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure: The Genoese in Seville and the Opening of the New World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), 1–2. For

- Lisbon, see Bailey W. Diffie and George D. Winius, *The Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415–1580* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 210–12.
11. Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, “De Nuevo Sobre los judíos Granadinos al tiempo de su expulsión,” *En la España Medieval* 30 (2007): 281–315, at 282.
  12. John Edwards, “Religious Faith and Doubt in Late Medieval Spain: Soria circa 1450–1500,” *Past and Present* 120 (1988), 3–25; Henry Kamen, *Imagining Spain: Historical Myth and National Identity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 74–81.
  13. Studies in this vein include Mair José Benardete, *Hispanic Culture and Character of the Sephardic Jews* (New York: Hispanic Institute in the United States, 1953); Norbert Rehrmann, “Los sefardíes como ‘anexo’ de la hispanidad: Ernesto Giménez Caballero y ‘La Gaceta Literaria,’” in *Vencer no es convencer: literatura e ideología del fascismo español*, ed. Mechthild Albert (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 1998), 51–74; Henry Méchoulán, “The Importance of Hispanicity in Jewish Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam,” in *In Iberia and Beyond: Hispanic Jews between Cultures* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 353–72; and Eleazar Gutwirth, “On the Hispanicity of Sephardi Jewry,” *Revue des Études Juives* 145 (1986): 347–57.
  14. Studies that focus on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries include Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), and David L. Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Diaspora, 1580–1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), on the communities of Western Sephardic Diaspora; Yaron Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans: Ottoman Jewish Society in the Seventeenth Century* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), on Ottoman Lands; Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, *A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), on the Jewries of North Africa; and Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2009), on the Sephardic merchants of Livorno.
  15. The literature here is vast. A small sampling includes Moshe Idel, “Encounters between Italian and Spanish Kabbalists in the Generation after the Expulsion,” in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1391–1648*, ed. Benjamin R. Gampel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 189–222; Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, “The Ultimate End of Human Life in Postexpulsion Philosophic Literature,” in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World*, 223–54; H. H. Ben Sasson, “Exile and Redemption through the Eyes of the Spanish Exiles,” in *The Yitzhak Baer Jubilee Volume* [in Hebrew], ed. Salo W. Baron (Jerusalem: Historical Society of Israel, 1960), 216–27; H. H. Ben Sasson, “The Generation of Spanish Exiles on Its Fate” [in Hebrew], *Zion* 26 (1961): 23–64; Rachel Elijor, “The Kabbalists of Dra’a” [in Hebrew], *Peamim* 24 (1985): 36–73; Joseph Hacker, “Intellectual Activity of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Jewish Thought In the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 93–135; and Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 191–218.

## CHAPTER 1

1. The edict has been published several times. For a recent edition, see *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 353–56.

2. A number of standard histories of medieval Spain emphasize the failure of religion to overcome the inherent regionalism and factionalism of medieval Hispano-Christian society. See J. N. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250–1516*, vol. 1, *1250–1410* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1976); Bernard F. Reilly, *The Medieval Spains* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Peter Linehan, *Spain, 1157–1300: A Partible Inheritance* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2008). For similar issues in Islamic Iberia, see David Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party-Kings* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); and Richard A. Fletcher, *Moorish Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
3. Jonathan Ray, “Images of the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia,” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 1 (2009): 195–211.
4. Obadiah 1:20. Moses ibn Ezra extols the virtues of Sephardic Jewry and describes its collective genealogy in the opening of the fifth chapter of his *Kitab al-Muhadarah wal-Mudhakarah*. See the Hebrew translation by A. S. Halkin, *Sefer ha-’iyunim veba-diyunim ‘al ha-shirah ha-’ivrit* (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1925).
5. Ray, “Images of the Jewish Community,” 196–98; and Isadore Twersky, “Aspects of the Social and Cultural History of Provençal Jewry,” *Journal of World History* 11 (1968): 185–207.
6. Jonathan P. Decter notes that Sepharad was “an imaginary construct” that “came to designate a region with no real political boundaries that existed wherever Jews imagined it to be.” Jonathan P. Decter, *Iberian Jewish Literature: Between al-Andalus and Christian Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 211.
7. I. A. A. Thompson: “Castile, Spain and the Monarchy: The Political Community from *Patria Natural* to *Patria Nacional*,” in *Spain, Europe and the Atlantic: Essays in Honour of John H. Elliott*, ed. Richard L. Kagan and Geoffrey Parker (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 127, 134. Indeed, the idea of a united Spain remained a point of intense debate and sometimes open conflict for centuries, and lives on to this day in regions such as Cataluña, Valencia, Galicia, and the Basque Country.
8. As Ralph Penny notes: “[I]t is surely the case that the Jews of Córdoba did not speak in the same way as those of Toledo, or those of Aguilar de Campó, let alone those of Barcelona or Lisbon.” Ralph Penny, “Dialect Contact and Social Networks in Judeo-Spanish,” *Romance Philology Review* 46 (1992): 125–40, at 125–26.
9. David M. Bunis, “Distinctive Characteristics of Jewish Ibero-Romance, circa 1492,” *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 4 (2004): 105–37, at 107–8.
10. Yom Tov Assis, “The Jews of Spain in Gentile Courts (XIIIth–XIVth Centuries)” [in Hebrew], in *Culture and Society in Medieval Jewish History*, ed. Menahem Ben Sasson, Reuven Bonfil, and Joseph Hacker (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1989), 399–430.
11. Jonathan Ray, “Royal Authority and the Jewish Community: The Crown Rabbi in Medieval Spain and Portugal,” in *Jewish Religious Leadership*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 2004), 307–31.
12. Miguel Ángel Motis Dolader, “Estudio de los objectos litúrgicos de las sinagogas zaragozanas embargados de la Corona en el año 1492,” *Aragon en la edad Media* 6 (1984): 247–62, at 252 and 257; and Francisco Cantera Burgos and José María Millás Vallicrosa, *Las Inscripciones hebraicas de España* (Madrid: C. Bermejo, 1956), no. 244.
13. In Castile, a number of Jews with positions close to the crown succeeded in passing on their influential posts from father to son. See, for instance, the case of Jacob Aben Nunes and his son, Yuda. Javier Castaño, “Social Networks in a Castilian Aljama and the Court Jews in the Fifteenth Century: A Preliminary Survey (Madrid 1440–1475),” *En la España Medieval* 20 (1997): 379–92, at 385–86.



14. Mark D. Meyerson, "Bloodshed and Borders: Violence and Acculturation in Late Medieval Jewish Society," in *Late Medieval Jewish Identities: Iberia and Beyond*, ed. Carmen Caballero-Navas and Esperanza Alfonso (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 13–26, esp. 14 and 18–19.
15. On the combative relationship between the various estates in medieval Iberian society, see Teofilo F. Ruiz, *From Heaven to Earth: The Reordering of Castilian Society, 1150–1350* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Peter Linehan, *Spanish Church and Society, 1150–1300* (London: Variorum, 1983); and Luis Suárez Fernández, "Evolución histórica de las hermandades castellanas," *Cuadernos de la historia de España* 16 (1951): 6–78.
16. Bernard Septimus, "Piety and Power in Thirteenth-Century Catalonia," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 1, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 197–230.
17. For oversight of moral conduct, see Stephen M. Passamanek, "The 'Berure Averot' and the Administration of Justice in XIII and XIV Century Spain," *Jewish Law Association Studies* 4 (1900): 135–46; Leah Bornstein-Makovetsky, "The 'Va'ad Berurei Averot' as a Judicial Body in Christian Spain and the Ottoman Empire," *Jewish Law Association Studies* 10 (2000): 117–39; and María Fuencisla García Casar, "Tensiones internas de las aljamas castellanas," in *Movimientos migratorios y expulsiones en la diáspora occidental*, ed. Fermin Miranda García (Pamplona, Spain: Universidad Pública de Navarra, 2000), 69–78.
18. Ray, "Royal Authority and the Jewish Community," 308–10.
19. Perhaps the most famous example of the politicization of intellectual factions was the so-called Maimonidean Controversy. For an overview, see Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, "The Maimonidean Controversy," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1997), 331–45; and Septimus, "Piety and Power."
20. Ram Ben Shalom has suggested that this stance may reflect the influence of similar developments within contemporary Christian society. Ram Ben Shalom, "Communication and Propaganda between Provence and Spain," in *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora: The Pre-Modern World*, ed. Sophia Menache (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 171–224, at 203–5.
21. See Carmi Horowitz, *The Jewish Sermon in 14th-Century Spain: The Derashot of R. Joshua ibn Shu'eib* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 1989); and Eleazar Gutwirth, "El gobernador judío ideal: acerca de un sermón inédito de Yosef ibn Shem Tob," in *Congreso Internacional Encuentro de las Tres Culturas III*, ed. Carlos Carrete Parrondo (Toledo, Spain: Ayuntamiento de Toledo, 1988), 67–75.
22. Solomon Alami, *Iggeret musar*, ed. A. M. Habermann (Jerusalem: n.p., 1946). See also Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966), vol. 2, 239–42.
23. Joseph Yavetz, *Hasidei Adonai* (Jerusalem: Hayim Zuckerman, 1934), 36–37.
24. R. Abba Mari of Lunel, *Minhat Qena'ot*, in *Responsa of the Rashba to R. Solomon b. Abraham ben Adret*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, part I, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), 23, 316, and 163.
25. For the events of 1391, see Emilio Mitre Fernández, *Los judíos de Castilla en tiempo de Enrique III: el pogrom de 1391* (Valladolid, Spain: Universidad de Valladolid, 1994); and Jaume Riera i Sans, "Els Avalots de 1391 a Girona," in *Jornades d'història dels jueus a Catalunya* (Girona, Spain: Ajuntament de Girona, 1990), 95–159.
26. For Jewish converts prior to 1391, see Paola Tartakoff, "Jews Converts and Inquisitors in the Crown of Aragon" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2007). The two most famous cases of converts turned polemicists are those of Pablo Christiani and Abner of Burgos.

27. The term originates in the Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah, 54a. On the classification of the Conversos as *'anusim*, see Moisés Orfali, *Los conversos españoles en la literatura rabinica* (Salamanca, Spain: Universidad Pontificia, 1982).
28. Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, "Judeoconversos andaluces en el siglo XV," in *Actas del III Coloquio de historia medieval andaluza* (Jaén, Spain: Diputación Provincial de Jaén, 1984), 27–55.
29. While the task of reconstructing the exact relationships in this regard is fraught with problems, the attempts to do so have produced a substantial literature. See Julio Caro Baroja, *Los judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea* (Madrid: Ediciones Istmo, 1978); Ben Zion Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1966); Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1932); Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); and Haim Beinart, *Conversos on Trial: The Inquisition in Ciudad Real* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981).
30. Hyam Maccoby, "The Tortosa Disputation, 1413–14 and Its Effects," in *The Expulsion of the Jews and Their Emigration to the Southern Low Countries (15th–16th c.)*, ed. Luc Dequeker and Werner Verbeke (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998), 23–34.
31. Eloy Benito Ruano, *Toledo en el siglo XV* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1961). The statutes are reproduced on 191–96.
32. For a discussion of *limpieza* in the sixteenth century, see Albert Sicroff, *Les controverses des statuts de "pureté de sang" en Espagne du XVe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Didier, 1960).
33. Benjamin Gampel analyzes the letter within its historical context in "A Letter to a Wayward Teacher: Transformation of Sephardic Culture in Christian Iberia," in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 389–447.
34. David Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain," *Past and Present* 174 (2002): 3–41, at 19.
35. Isaac Abravanel, cited in David T. Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles: An Anthology of Medieval Chronicles Relating to the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal* (North Hollywood, CA: Carmi House Press, 1992), 52.
36. Abraham Zacuto, *Sefer Yuhasin ha-Shalem* (1450; reprint, Jerusalem: Hotsa'at Yerid ha-Sefarim, 2004), 224. For Zacuto's biography, see José Chabás and Bernard R. Goldstein, *Astronomy in the Iberian Peninsula: Abraham Zacut and the Transition from Manuscript to Print* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2000), 1–15.
37. Zacuto, *Sefer Yuhasin*, 224.
38. See María Fuencisla García Casar, "Ambitos ocultos: criptojudías y creencias soterradas," in *La mujer en la cultura judía medieval*, ed. Miguel Ángel Motis Dolader (Jaca, Spain: Ayuntamiento de Jaca, 2008), 159–69, at 160–61.
39. See Julio Valdeón Baroque, "El siglo XIV: La quiebra de la convivencia entre las tres religiones," in *Cristianos, musulmanes y judíos en la España medieval: de la aceptación al rechazo*, ed. Julio Valdeón Baroque (Valladolid, Spain: Ambito Ediciones, 2004), 125–48; and Manuel González Jiménez, "El fracaso de la convivencia de moros y judíos en Andalucía (ss. XIII–XV)," in *Proyección histórica de España I*, ed. Eufemio Lorenzo Sanz (Valladolid, Spain: Junta de Castilla y León, 1993), 129–49.
40. Spanish historians have long since recognized the underlying problems of such terminology, but better terms have not yet emerged, and *reconquista* and *repoblación* remain in use.
41. On the intricacies of warfare, alliances, and religious identity in medieval Spain, see Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 1–98.

42. Jonathan Ray, "Beyond Tolerance and Persecution: Reassessing our Approach to Medieval Convivencia," *Jewish Social Studies* 11 (2005): 1–18. This tendency was part of a general trend of medieval Jewish life in all regions.
43. Jonathan Ray, "Jew in the Text: What Christian Charters Tell Us about Medieval Jewish Society," *Medieval Encounters* 16 (2010): 243–67.
44. Royal protection could be lifted due to apathy, as in the case of John I of Aragon's response to the riots of 1391, or in a calculated effort to win popular support, as illustrated by Enrique de Trastámara during his candidacy for the Castilian throne. After being crowned, Enrique ended his popular call to ban the Jews from the Castilian court, and returned to the status quo ante.
45. Archivo de la Corona de Aragon (ACA), Canc. reg. 1972, fol. 168r–v.
46. The one glaring exception in this regard was the ancient Jewish community of Cataluña, which never recovered from the destruction of 1391.
47. Robin Mundill, "Medieval Anglo-Jewry: Expulsion and Exodus," in *Judenvertreibungen in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Friedhelm Burgard, Alfred Haverkamp, and Gerd Mentgen (Hannover, Germany: Hahn, 1999), 75–97; Sophia Menache, "The King, the Church and the Jews: Some Considerations on the Expulsions from England and France," *Medieval History* 13 (1987): 223–50; and William Chester Jordan, "Jews, Regalian Rights, and the Constitution in Medieval France," *AJS Review* 23 (1998): 1–16.
48. Ray, "Beyond Tolerance and Persecution," 5–9.
49. Yom Tov Assis, "Els jueus de Barcelona i el comerç marítim amb la Mediterrània oriental," *Tamid* 2 (1998–99): 29–71; José Hinojosa Montalvo, "Judíos Portugueses en Valencia a fines de la edad media," *Revista de Ciências Históricas, Universidade Portucalense* 10 (1995): 221–34; and María Dolores López Pérez, *La Corona de Aragon y el Magreb en el siglo XIV (1331–1410)* (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1995), 358–69.
50. Enrique Cantera Montenegro, "El asentamiento de judíos castellanos en el norte de África tras la expulsión de 1492," *Actas del Congreso Internacional "El estrecho de Gibraltar"*, ed. Eduardo Ripoll Perelló (Madrid: Universidad Nacional Educación a Distancia, 1988), 277–88, at 279.
51. Sporadic emigration continued throughout the fifteenth century. Anti-Converso riots in Andalusia prompted a small exodus from the region in 1473. Ladero Quesada, "Judeoconversos andaluces."
52. Gutwirth, "El gobernador judío ideal," 69.
53. Abravanel cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 53.
54. Máximo Diago Hernando, "La movilidad de los judíos a ambos lados de la frontera entre las Coronas de Castilla y Aragón durante el siglo XIV," *Sefarad* 63 (2003), 237–82, at 238–39.
55. *Ibid.*, 246–47.
56. Halorki cited in Gampel, "A Letter to a Wayward Teacher," 413.
57. Andrew J. Schoenfeld, "Immigration and Assimilation in the Jewish Community of Late Venetian Crete (15th–17th Centuries)," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 25 (2007): 1–15.
58. Benjamin Arbel, "Jews in Cyprus: New Evidence from the Venetian Period," *Jewish Social Studies* 4 (1979): 23–40, at 24.
59. Ladero Quesada, "Judeoconversos andaluces," 31–33.
60. Enrique Gozalbes Cravioto, "Las desventuras de un judío malagueño en Marruecos," *Jábega* 63 (1989): 25–30, at 26; and Enrique Gozalbes Cravioto, "Los judíos en la Málaga musulmana," *Jábega* 59 (1988): 16–26, at 24.

61. José Ramón Magdalena Nom de Déu, "Viajes de Rabí Yisḥaq ibn al-Farh de Málaga por 'Erez-Yisrael y Siria (1441): Texto hebreo y traducción," *Anuari de Filologia* 16 (2004): 81–87.
62. Jonathan Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier: The Reconquista and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), chap. 5; and Septimus, "Piety and Power." It remains to be seen whether the Jewish communal structures in other regions of the Mediterranean world paralleled those in Spain. For most regions, current scholarship remains tethered to outmoded concepts of religious leadership that accept the prescriptive models of rabbinic literature as normative. An exception is Bernard Dov Cooperman; see Cooperman, "Theorizing Jewish Self Government in Early Modern Italy," in *Una Manna Buona per Mantova*, ed. Mauro Perani (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2004), 365–80; and Cooperman, "Ethnicity and Institution Building among Jews in Early Modern Rome," *AJS Review* 30 (2006): 119–45. For the latest approach to early Ottoman Jewry, see Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, esp. 163–311.

## CHAPTER 2

1. Abravanel cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 53, with reference to Numbers 17:12.
2. See below, chapter 7.
3. Abraham David, *In Zion and Jerusalem: The Itinerary of Rabbi Moses Basola (1521–1523)* (Jerusalem: C. G. Foundation Jerusalem Project, 1999), 116.
4. Solomon ibn Verga, *The Staff of Judah (Shevet Yehuda)*, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 97; and Judah ben Jacob ibn Hayyat, *The Offering of Judah (Minhat Yeudah)*, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 114.
5. The following translation is taken from Shem Tov ben Jamil, *The Crown of Good of a Name = Keter Shem Tov*, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 118. His account was first published by Y. M. Toledano, "Mi-Kitvei Yad," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 5 (1928): 403–9, and has been discussed by Benjamin R. Gampel, *The Last Jews on Iberian Soil: Navarrese Jewry 1497–1498* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 130–32; and Eliezer Gutwirth, "De Castellnou a Tlemcen, la crónica de Shem Tov de Tudela de Navarra," *Anales de la Historia de Alicante. Historia Medieval* 12 (1999): 171–82.
6. Navarre would eventually fall under Spanish control in 1512. Gampel estimates the number of Jews who left Navarre in 1498 at approximately 3,550. Gampel, *Last Jews on Iberian Soil*, 20.
7. Where his sons had been staying.
8. Ibn Jamil, *The Crown of the Good Name (Keter Shem Tov)*, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 119.
9. It is quite possible that these Christian ministers and judges were Conversos.
10. Ibn Jamil cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 119–20.
11. Cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 89. These relatives were all members of the de la Cavalleria clan, on whom see F. Vendrell Gallostra, "Aportaciones documentales para el estudio de la familia Caballería," *Sefarad* 3 (1943): 117–18. The Dominican friar Vicente Ferrer (1350–1419) was a leading figure in the push to convert the Jews.
12. Ha-Kohen, *Vale of Tears*, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 106.
13. Cited in Eleazar Gutwirth, "Historians in Context: Jewish Historiography in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Frankfurter Judaistischer Beiträge* 30 (2003): 147–68, at 152. Lines 30–32 of the text mention baptismal waters in an allusion to waters given to adulterous

- women (*mayim merurim*). The reference here is to the sin of adultery in Numbers 5:24, and thus an attack on the others who converted, too.
14. Yitzhak Baer's famous thesis that the philosophical inclination of the intellectual elite made the entire community prone to conversion is no longer considered viable.
  15. Mark Meyerson, "Catalan and Aragonese Converts at the Time of the Expulsion," in *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume II*, ed. Barry Walfish (Haifa, Israel: Haifa University Press, 1992), 131–49.
  16. Beinart, *Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 251–52. Beinart understands the son in this particular situation to have shocked his family with his decision to convert, only to have a change of heart when the family's assets were safely sold off. The more obvious interpretation, it seems to me, is that the decision to leave a son behind until this important business was taken care of was the family's plan from the start. For examples of fifteenth-century Conversos shipping their sons off to North Africa, see Mark Meyerson, *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 186n1.
  17. Miguel Ángel Motis Dolader, "Diáspora de los judíos del reino de Aragón en Italia," in *XIV Congresso di storia della Corona D'Aragona*, vol. 4 (Sassari, Italy: Delfino, 1993), 292; and Pedro Sanahuja, *Lérida en sus luchas por la fé* (Lleida: C.S.I.C. Instituto de estudios ilerenses, 1946), 69. See also the example of the Jews of Ejea de los Caballeros, who joined up with the Jews of the larger town of Huesca. Motis Dolader, "Diáspora de los judíos," 298.
  18. For refugees of 1391, see Simon ben Zemach Duran (Tashbets), *Sefer ha-Tashbets, She'elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)*, I: 62, III: 59; and Solomon ben Simon Duran (Rashbash), *She'elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)*, 479.
  19. Luis Suárez Fernández, *Documentos acerca de la expulsión de los judíos* (Valladolid, Spain: Aldecoa, 1964), 328; and Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, "Dos Temas de la Granada Nazari," *Cuadernos de Historia* 3 (1969): 321–45, at 338.
  20. Ladero Quesada, "De Nuevo Sobre los judíos Granadinos," 283.
  21. Among the wealthier families who left the former Kingdom of Granada in 1492 is one named Aben Hino—which may be the "Avendino" clan that came to play such an important role in North Africa. The equally famous Abenzemerro name also appears, though not among the richer clans. Several Jews named Alescar (Alashkar?) are among the richest. Ladero Quesada, "De Nuevo Sobre los judíos Granadinos," 285.
  22. Anonymous, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 131.
  23. Ha-Kohen, *Vale of Tears*, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 108.
  24. See the discussion in Henry Kamen, "The Mediterranean and the Expulsion of the Jews in 1492," *Past and Present* 119 (1988): 30–55.
  25. Motis Dolader, "Diáspora de los judíos." For the Jews of Granada, see Ladero Quesada, "De Nuevo Sobre los judíos Granadinos." For the Navarrese exiles, see Gampel, *The Last Jews on Iberian Soil*.
  26. See the documents cited in François Soyer, *The Persecution of Jews and Muslims in Portugal* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 154–55, 159.
  27. Abraham David, "The Spanish Expulsion and the Portuguese Persecution through the Eyes of the Historian Gedalyah ibn Yahya," *Sefarad* 56 (1996), 56; and Soyer, *Persecution of Jews*, 177–80.
  28. João Lucio d'Azevedo, *História dos Christãos-Novos portugueses* (Lisbon: Livraria clássica editora de A. M. Teixeira, 1921), 17–40; and Alexandre Herculano, *History of the Origin and Establishment of the Inquisition in Portugal* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1926), 263–67.

29. Ibn Hayyat, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 113.
30. See the letter of Antoine Malfante in G. R. Crone, ed., *The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents on Western Africa in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1937), 86.
31. Jane S. Gerber, *Jewish Society in Fez, 1450–1700: Studies in Communal and Economic Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 19–21, 24.
32. John O. Hunwick, “Al-Maghili and the Jews of Tuwat: The Demise of a Community,” *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985): 155–83. Tu’at (Tuwat) was the gateway to the *bilad al-Sudan*—the trade centers of the southern Sahara, and the starting point for the West African gold trade.
33. Other clerics stirred up revolt against Maghrebi Jews in the mid-fifteenth century. Robert Brunschvig, Jean Adorne, and Joos van Ghiste, eds., *Deux récits de voyage inédits en Afrique du Nord au XVe siècle: Abdalbasit B. Halil et Adorne* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001), 63–65.
34. Ha-Kohen, *Vale of Tears*, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 106.
35. Luce López Baralt, “La angustia secreta del exilio: el testimonio de un morisco de Túnez,” *Hispanic Review* 55 (1987): 41–57.
36. Soyer, *Persecution of Jews*, 252.
37. Michel Abitbol, “Juifs d’Afrique du Nord et expulsés d’Espagne après 1492,” *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions* 210 (1993): 49–90, at 83–86; and Isidore Epstein, *The Responsa of Rabbi Simon b. Zemah Duran as a Source for the History of the Jews of North Africa* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1930), 15–17, 36–37, 75–76. For more on the social and cultural factors in the formation of Jewish congregations, see below, chapter 5.
38. H. Z. Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 13.
39. Abraham Gross, *Iberian Jewry from Twilight to Dawn: The World of Rabbi Abraham Saba* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 10–13.
40. Fritz Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1936), vol. 2, 424; and Hirschberg, *Jews in North Africa*, 410. On Ait Daoud, see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 141.
41. A privileged few were exempt from many of these restrictions, but even these depended upon the often-capricious approval of Muslim rulers.
42. Gerber, *Jewish Society in Fez*, 24.
43. Abraham b. Solomon Torrutiel [Arduetiel], *Sefer Ha-Kabbalah*, in Adolf Neubauer, ed., *Medieval Jewish Chronicles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887–95), vol. 2, 113.
44. For the difficult conditions faced by Jewish refugees in Genoa, see the observations of Bartolomeo Senarga in his *De rebus genuensibus*: “Venerunt in urben nostram plurs, diutis tamen non moraturi ... concessum tame nest, ut naves quibus vehebantur reparari possent et ipsi aliquantulum a fluctuatione refici paucorum dierum mora. Diceret illos larvas: arrant enim macileni, pallidi, oculis intrinsecus positos et nisi quod vix se movebant, mortuos diceret... Multi apud molem moriebantur.” Cited in Motis Dolader, “Diáspora de los judíos,” 302n56.
45. Solomon Ibn Verga, *Sefer Shevet Yehudah*, ed. Abraham Shohat (Jerusalem: n.p., 1947), 123–24.
46. Cooperman, “Ethnicity and Institution Building in Early Modern Rome”; and Robert Bonfil, “The History of Spanish and Portuguese Jews in Italy,” in *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, vol. 2, ed. Haim Beinart (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), 219.
47. Ariel Toaff, “Le Comunità di Aragona e Catalonia in Italia e a Roma in Particolare,” in *Attes del Simposi Internacional sobre cultura Sefardita*, ed. Josep Ribera (Barcelona: Facultat de

- Filologia, 1993), 29–45, at 31. Another Christian account notes that the Jews leaving Sicily in 1493 were accused of carrying plague. Ariel Toaff, “L’espulsione degli ebrei dalla Sicilia nel 1492,” in *Movimientos migratorios y expulsiones en la diáspora occidental: Terceros Encuentros Judaicos de Tudela*, ed. Fermín Miranda García (Pamplona, Spain: Universidad Pública de Navarra, 2000), 185–98, at 189.
48. Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels*, 138nn34–35.
  49. Nonetheless, the association of Jews with the plague continued long after 1492. In Cyprus, an outbreak of the plague in 1533 was blamed on local Jews. Arbel, “Jews in Cyprus,” 25.
  50. André de la Vigne, *Le Voyage de Naples* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1981), 233. The use of religious zeal to obscure more temporal motives in pillaging Jewish communities recalls the infamous Rhineland massacres of the first crusade. On Charles VIII in Rome, see the classic account of Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, trans. Sidney Alexander (New York: Macmillan, 1969); and Thomas James Dandele, *Spanish Rome, 1500–1700* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 19–21.
  51. Marino Sanuto, cited in Riccardo Filangieri, *Una cronaca napoletana figurata del quattrocento* (Naples: L’Arte Tipografica, 1956) 125n72. Though Sanuto uses the term “marrani,” he clearly means “Jews.” See Felipe Ruiz Martín, “La expulsión de los judíos del reino de Nápoles,” *Hispania* 9 (1949): 28–76, at 32–35.
  52. Motis Dolader, *La expulsión de los judíos del reino de Aragón*, vol. 2 (Zaragoza: Diputación General de Aragón, 1990), 282.
  53. Renata Segre, “Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991): 112–37. As had been the case in France, Provence, and much of the German-speaking territories in the fourteenth century, a few Jews managed to stay on in southern Italy until 1541. See Cecil Roth, *History of the Jews of Italy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1946), 281–88.
  54. Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (Turin, Italy: Einaudi, 1963), 109–46; and Yom Tov Ludwig Bato, “Die Einwanderung deutscher Juden nach Italien im Zeitalter der Renaissance,” *Emuna* 7 (1972): 209–18.
  55. Anonymous, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 134.
  56. Motis Dolader, “Diáspora de los judíos,” 300.
  57. The paucity of sources makes the Jewish experience in Ottoman lands of the early sixteenth century hard to gauge. See Amnon Cohen and Bernard Lewis, *Population and Revenue in the Towns of Palestine in the Sixteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); and Heath Lowry, “When Did the Sephardim Arrive in Salonica? The Testimony of the Ottoman Tax Registers, 1478–1613,” in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Levy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 203–13.
  58. Norman A. Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979), 295–97.
  59. *Ibid.*, 300, 301–2.
  60. Elijah Capsali, *Seder Eliahu Zuta*, ed. Aryeh Shmuelevitz et al. (Tel Aviv: University of Tel Aviv, 1983), vol. 1, 272–73. These forced conversions appear to have been part of a broader imperial program to reestablish order following the rebellion and turmoil Bayezid II faced after ascending the throne in 1482. Mark Alan Epstein, *Ottoman Jewish Communities and their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Freiburg, Germany: K. Schwarz, 1980), 29.
  61. Joseph Hacker, “Jewish Autonomy in the Ottoman Empire: Its Scope and Limits; Jewish Courts from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century,” in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Levy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 157–58.



62. Samuel de Medina, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Maharashdam: ha-Shayakhote be Tur Hoshen Mishpat* (Jerusalem: Zikhron Aharon, 2007), section 303, 215b–d.
63. Abraham David, “Safed, foyer de retour au judaïsme de ‘Conversos’ au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Revue des Études Juives* 1–2 (1987): 63–83. The Jewish traveler Obadiah de Bertinoro, who visited the Levant in 1488, mentions that most of the settlers in the Land of Israel were former rabbis and former Conversos. Even in Jerusalem, the size of the Jewish population remained modest throughout the sixteenth century. Cohen and Lewis, *Population and Revenue in the Towns of Palestine*.
64. Joseph Hacker, “The Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire,” in *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, ed. Haim Beinart (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), vol. 2, 109–33, at 111. Hacker, following perhaps too closely a statement by Isaac Abravanel, wrote that most Spanish refugees reached the Ottoman Empire shortly after the expulsion (114). However, Hacker seems to disregard the large percentage of those expelled in 1492 who remained trapped in Portugal at the time of Abravanel’s observation around 1505.
65. This appears to be the largest size that the Jewish population of Salonica reached in the sixteenth century. Heath Lowry suggests that this may indicate that Salonica served as a point of transit and further settlement for the Balkans. Lowry, “When Did the Sephardim Arrive in Salonica?” The tax register of 1519 lists *taife-I Espanya* of 754 households. By 1530–31, that number reached 2,548 Sephardic households. Hacker, “Jewish Autonomy in the Ottoman Empire,” 207–8.
66. Cited in Meir Zvi Benaya, *Moshe Almosnino ish saloniki: po’alo veyetsirato* (Tel Aviv: University of Tel Aviv, 1996), 62.
67. On the subject of return, see Haim Beinart, “Vuelta de judíos a España después de la expulsión,” in *Judíos, Sefarditas, Conversos: la expulsión de 1492 y sus consecuencias*, ed. Ángel Alcalá (Valladolid, Spain: Ambito Ediciones, 1995), 181–94.
68. Beinart, *Expulsion of the Jews*, 251–52. For similar alliances made by groups of Jews leaving from the Crown of Aragon, see José Hinojosa Montalvo, “Solidaridad judía ante la expulsión,” *Saitabi* 23 (1983): 105–24.
69. On Abulafia, see José Gómez-Menor Fuentes, “Un judío converso de 1498: Diego Gómez de Toledo (Semuel Abulafia) y su proceso inquisitorial,” *Sefarad* 33 (1973): 45–110. On de Águila, see Suárez Fernández, *Documentos acerca de la expulsión de los judíos*, 495–96.
70. See the case of Yuda Aben Nunes, a wealthy physician in Madrid, who chose exile in 1492, but soon returned as a convert. Castaño, “Social Networks in a Castilian Aljama,” 386.
71. Such was the case with regard to the Jews of Torrijos and Maqueda. Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, 411–13.
72. Suárez Fernández, *Documentos acerca de la expulsión de los judíos*, 487–89; and Beinart, *Expulsion of the Jews*, 329–31.
73. Beinart, *Expulsion of the Jews*, 335.
74. Even family members and friends turned on one another in this way. Beinart, *Expulsion of the Jews*, 336–37.
75. Gonzalo Viñuales Ferreiro, “El regreso de judeoconversos tras la expulsión de 1492: Los ‘retornados’ de la diócesis de Toledo,” *El Olivo* 60 (2004): 93–114, at 100–103.
76. *Ibid.*, 108–14.
77. Beinart, *Expulsion of the Jews*, 258, and 389–90.
78. *Ibid.*, 274–75.
79. See the example of Mosén Miguel Ximenez, who returned to Spain and was baptized as late as July 24, 1510. Archivo Histórico Provincial de Zaragoza, sección inquisición, leg. 28, no. 2, f. 21v.



80. Nadia Zeldes, "Sefardi and Sicilian Exiles in the Kingdom of Naples: Settlement, Community Formation and Crisis," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 6 (2008): 237–65, at 263.
81. Archivo Histórico Provincial de Zaragoza, sección inquisición, leg. 28, no. 2, ff. 8–8v.
82. Archivo Histórico Provincial de Zaragoza, sección inquisición, leg. 28, no. 9, f. 68; and Archivo Histórico Provincial de Zaragoza, Protocolo de Juan de Altarriba, 1496, 106v–107.
83. Archivo de la Catedral de Huesca, Registrum Comune curies Vacariatus Oscense, 1499–1503, s.f.s.d. (29-V-1499); Antonio Durán Gudiol, *La judería de Huesca* (Zaragoza: Guara, 1984), 141; Miguel Ángel Motis Dolader, "La conversión de judíos Aragoneses al raíz del Edicto de Expulsión," in *Encuentros en Sefarad*, ed. Francisco Ruiz Gómez and Manuel Espadas Burgos (Ciudad Real, Spain: Instituto de Estudios Manchegos, 1987), 231. For a similar case, see that of the Jew Isaac ben Jonas Ras of Huesca, who received baptism on January 20, 1493. Gemma Escriba i Bonastre and Maria Pilar Frago i Pérez, eds., *Documents dels Jueus de Girona 1124–1595* (Girona, Spain: Ajuntament de Girona, 1992), no. 1195.
84. ACA, Real Cancillería, reg. 3567, fol. 104v.
85. ACA, Real Cancillería, reg. 3571, fol. 127.
86. Enrique Cantera Montenegro, "Judeoconvertos de Torrelaguna: Retorno de algunos expulsados entre 1493 y 1495," *Sefarad* 39 (1979): 333–46, at 337–38.
87. Cited in Hirschberg, *Jews in North Africa*, 406–7.

## CHAPTER 3

1. The following is taken from the inquisitorial record published by Fidel Fita, "El judío errante de Illescas (1484–1514)," *Boletín de la Real Academia de Historia* 6 (1888): 130–40. For references to Luis de las Isla, see Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jewish Community of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (Portland, OR: Littman Library, 2000), 55; Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities," 17–18; and J. N. Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain, 1500–1700: The Formation of a Myth* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 166.
2. For the portrayal of Converso emigration as prompted by Jewish piety, see Samuel Usque, *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel*, ed. and trans. Martin A. Cohen (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1965); Isaac Abravanel, "Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, 43,6," in *Perush 'al nevi'im ahronim* (Jerusalem: Torah va-da'at, 1955); and Abraham Saba in Gross, *Iberian Jewry from Twilight to Dawn*, 111–13.
3. Fita, "El judío errante," 131–32.
4. Gilles Veinstein, "Une communauté ottomane: Les Juifs d'Avlonya (Valona) dans la deuxième moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Gli ebrei e Venezia: secoli XIV–XVIII*, ed. Gaetano Cozzi (Milan: Edizioni Comunità, 1987), 781–828, at 785.
5. Fita, "El judío errante," 136. A *funduq*, or caravansary, was a lodging for merchants.
6. *Ibid.*, 137.
7. *Ibid.*, 136.
8. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 55.
9. He moved to Valladolid, Zaragoza, and the smaller towns of Pedrola, Ricla, and El Castellar. Archivo Histórico Provincial de Zaragoza, sección Inquisición, leg. 29, no. 9, ff. 46–7.
10. Cited in David, "The Spanish Expulsion," 53.
11. For traditional views on ransoming of captives (*pidyon shvuyim*), see Talmud BB, 8a, 8b, 3b. On the phenomenon in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean, see Eliezer Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom in Jewish Society (1391–1830)* [in Hebrew] (Ramat-Gan, Israel:

- Bar-Ilan University Press, 1980); and Israel Goldman, *The Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1970), 100–101.
12. Zeldes, “Sefardi and Sicilian Exiles in the Kingdom of Naples,” 244.
  13. On corsairs, see Salvatore Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo: cristiani e musulmani fra guerra, schiavitù e commercio* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1993); esp. 191–201; Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), vol. 2, 865–91; and Peter Earle, *Corsairs of Malta and Barbary* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1970), 168–78.
  14. Hirschberg, *Jews in North Africa*, 439.
  15. Renegades accounted for thirteen of the twenty-three *alcaldes* operating in the city in 1581. Antonio de Sosa (a.k.a. Diego De Haedo), *Topographia e historia general de Argel* (Val-ladolid, Spain, 1612), I:58. Robert C. Davis has suggested that the total number of Europeans enslaved during the early modern period may have exceeded one million. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, Barbary Coast and Italy, 1500–1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
  16. On Jews captured in battles during this period, see Moses Alashkar, *She’elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)* (Ferrara, Italy, 1556), nos. 16 and 70; and Jacob Berab, *She’elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1988), nos. 56–57.
  17. Martin Jacobs, “Exposed to all the Currents of the Mediterranean: A Sixteenth-Century Venetian Rabbi on Muslim History,” *AJS Review* 29 (2005): 47–68.
  18. Nadia Zeldes, “Un tragico ritorno: schiavi ebrei in Sicilia dopo la conquista spagnola di Tripoli (1510),” *Nuove effemeridi* 54 (2001): 47–55.
  19. *Ibid.*, 50–51.
  20. Cited in Hirschberg, *Jews in North Africa*, 444.
  21. As Hirschberg noted, even the relatively strong, centralized rule of the Wattasid dynasty was plagued by decades of warfare with its Sherifian rivals, the Banu Sa’d. *Ibid.*, 403.
  22. *Ibid.*, 431. Such arrangements did not prevent the troops from committing atrocities against the Jews, including rape and enslavement.
  23. Henry de Castries, ed., *Les Sources inédites de l’histoire du Maroc, ser. I, Dynastie saadienne: Archives et bibliothèques de Espagne* (Paris: Leroux, 1921), vol. 1, letter 34.
  24. Hirschberg, *Jews in North Africa*, 404.
  25. Gerber, *Jewish Society in Fez*, 31.
  26. Enrique Gozalbes Cravioto, “Arcila, puerto norteafricano de recepción de los sefarditas (1492–1493),” *Espacio, Tiempo, y Forma, ser. 3, Historia Medieval*, no. 6 (1993): 39–56.
  27. Hunwick, “Al-Maghili and the Jews of Tuwat,” 166–67.
  28. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms*, vol. 2, 537; and generally Mercedes García-Arenal and Miguel Ángel de Bunes, *Los españoles y el norte de África, siglos XV–XVIII* (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992).
  29. Hirschberg, *Jews in North Africa*, 443.
  30. José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, *Os Judeus na expansão portuguesa em Marrocos durante o século XVI: Origens e actividades duma Comunidade* (Lisbon: Edições APPACDM, 1997).
  31. Hirschberg, *Jews in North Africa*, 403–4. Coutinho de Borba was governor in the 1490s, and again from 1505–14.
  32. Henry de Castries, ed., *Les Sources inédites de l’histoire du Maroc, ser. I, Dynastie saadienne: Archives et bibliothèques de Portugal* (Paris: Leroux, 1939), vol. 4, no. 20.
  33. Bernard Rosenberger, “Aspects du commerce portugais avec le Maroc (XVe–XVIe siècles),” in *Aquém e além da Taprobana: Estudos Luso-Orientais à memória de Jean Aubin*

- e Denys Lombard*, ed. Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz (Lisbon: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2002), 71–84.
34. J. Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, *Judeus e Cristãos-Novos de Cochim: História e Memória (1500–1662)* (Braga, Portugal: Edições APPACDM, 2004), 341–44.
  35. Walter Fischel, “New Sources for the History of the Jewish Diaspora in Asia in the 16th Century,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 49 (1950): 379–99, at 386–87.
  36. J. Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, “O interprete judeu nos ‘Grandes Espacos’ do oriente (seculo XVI),” in *Em nome da fé: estudos in memoriam de Elias Lipiner*, ed. Nachman Falbel et al. (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1999), 203–24.
  37. Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). On the question of Sephardic cultural identity, see below, chapter 7.
  38. José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, “In the Shadow of Empire: Portuguese Jewish Communities in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Portuguese Colonial Cities in the Early Modern World*, ed. Liam M. Brockey (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 37.
  39. Irene Silverblatt, “The Black Legend and Global Conspiracies: Spain, the Inquisition and the Emerging New World,” in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourse of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, ed. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 99–116.
  40. See Bruno Feitler, “Jews and New Christians in Dutch Brazil, 1630–1654,” in *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos and Crypto-Jews in Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800*, ed. Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 123–51. Although crypto-Judaism among Converso settlers in the Americas appears to have been much less prevalent than many Old Christians suspected at the time, the number of New Christians who reverted to Judaism in Holland and Dutch Brazil is telling. Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition* (New York: New American Library, 1965), 42–43, 64–65, 290, 293–94, 297–98; and David Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 61–62.
  41. On the slow migration of Jews from Iberia to the Ottoman Empire, see Martin Jacobs, *Islamische Geschichte in jüdischen Chroniken: Hebräische Historiographie des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 11–18.
  42. For a corrective, see Jonathan Ray, “Iberian Jewry between West and East: Jewish Settlement in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean,” *Mediterranean Studies* 48 (2009): 44–65.
  43. Among the wide array of biographies of Doña Gracia, see Cecil Roth, *The House of Nasi: Doña Gracia* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1948); Andrée Aelion Brooks, *The Woman Who Defied Kings: The Life and Times of Doña Gracia Nasi—a Jewish Leader during the Renaissance* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2002); and José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, “Portrait of the ‘Senhora’ with Manifold Nuances: D. Grácia Nasi ‘à l’oeuvre’ and the Fictional D. Grácia,” in *Gender and Identity*, ed. Tamar Alexander-Frizer et al. (Beer Sheva, Israel: Moshe David Gaon Center for Ladino Culture, 2010), 45–61.
  44. James Amelang, “Myth of the Mediterranean City: Perceptions of Sociability,” in *Mediterranean Urban Culture, 1400–1700*, ed. Alexander Cowan (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 15–30; and Joseph Wheeler, “Neighborhoods and Local Loyalties in Renaissance Venice,” in *ibid.*, 31–42. This idea of the region as a whole built upon myriad social fragments and the short-distance contacts these groups maintained with one another is also reflected in Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcel’s pioneering *The Corrupting Sea: A study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2000).

45. David Abulafia, "The Aragonese Kings of Naples and the Jews," in *The Jews of Italy: Memory and Identity*, ed. Bernard D. Cooperman and Barbara Garvin (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2000), 101.
46. Joseph Hacker, "The Sürgün System and Jewish Society in the Ottoman Empire during the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries," in *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and Leadership*, ed. Aron Rodrigue (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1992), 1–65, at 24–27.
47. See Benjamin Braude, "The Rise and Fall of Salonica Woollens, 1500–1650: Technology Transfer and Western Competition," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991): 216–36; and Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands*, 298–300.
48. Minna Rozen, "Strangers in a Strange Land: The Extraterritorial Status of the Jews in Italy and the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," in *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and Leadership*, ed. Aron Rodrigue (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1992), 123–66, at 126.
49. Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World of Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 61–63; Benjamin Ravid, "The Religious, Economic and Social Background and Context of the Establishment of the Ghetti of Venice," in *Gli Ebrei e Venezia, secoli XIV–XVIII*, ed. Gaetano Cozzi (Milan: Edizioni Comunità, 1987), 211–59.
50. Meir Benayahu, *Relations between Greek and Italian Jewry* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: ha-Makhon le-heker ha-tefusot, 1980), 173–85.
51. James Nelson Novoa, "Documents Regarding the Settlement of Portuguese New Christians in Tuscany," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 5 (2007), 263. Portuguese Conversos were able to obtain official rights from Charles V to remain in the Low Countries as early as 1526. They were eventually expelled from Antwerp around 1549.
52. Gérard Nahon, "From New Christians to the Portuguese Jewish Nation in France," in *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, ed. Haim Beinart (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), 336–64, at 337.
53. *Ibid.*, 339.
54. *Ibid.*, 341. Small groups of Portuguese merchants could be found in sixteenth-century Paris and Marseille, but not full communities.
55. The presence of Portuguese Converso bankers in Ancona coincided with the heyday of the Flanders market in precious metals. Viviana Bonazzoli, "Ebrei italiani, portoghesi, levantini sulla piazza commerciale di Ancona intorno alla metà Cinquecento," in *Gli ebrei e Venezia, secoli XIV–XVIII*, ed. Gaetano Cozzi (Milan: Edizioni Comunità, 1987), 732. See also the connection between Venetian and Dutch Sephardim with regard to the dotar society, an institution developed for the care of poor Sephardic women and orphans in the seventeenth century. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 125–34.
56. Carlo Brizzolari, *Gli ebrei nella storia di Genova* (Genoa: Sabatelli, 1971), 71ff.
57. David Abulafia, "Il mezzogiorno peninsulare dai bizantini all' espulsione (1541)," *Storia d'Italia* 11 (1996): 3–44.
58. The customs officer in charge of the departure of the local Jewish population in Sicily was himself a recent convert who remained there, only to run afoul of the Inquisition in 1513 as "an obstinate Judaizing neophyte." Toaff, "L'espulsione degli ebrei," 189.
59. *Ibid.*, 191.
60. Kenneth R. Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy, 1555–1593* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1977).

61. Maria José Ferro Tavares, "The Portuguese Jews after Baptism," in *Studies in the History of the Portuguese Jews from Their Expulsion in 1497 through Their Dispersion*, ed. Israel J. Katz and M. Mitchell Serels (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 2000), 7–28, at 17–18.
62. Maria José Ferro Tavares, "A expulsão dos judeus de Portugal: conjuntura peninsular," in *Diáspora e expansão: Os judeus e os descobrimentos portugueses*, ed. António Manuel Hespanha (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1997), 10–20, at 18.
63. Novoa, "Documents Regarding the Settlement of Portuguese New Christians," 264.
64. David Ha-Kohen, cited in Solomon B. Freehof, ed., *The Responsa Literature* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1955), 146.
65. For the term "cultural commuter," see Thomas Glick, "On Converso and Marrano Ethnicity," in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1391–1648*, ed. Benjamin R. Gampel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 59–76. See also Ferro Tavares, "Portuguese Jews after Baptism," 10.
66. In many ways, the Italian communities of Livorno and Venice fell within the European, or "Western," Diaspora, but also acted as cultural intermediaries between the two.

#### CHAPTER 4

1. Salo Wittmayer Baron, *The Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1942), vol. 1, vii. Echoes of Baron's characterization of the autonomous Jewish community can be found throughout the work of his contemporary, Yitzhak Baer, as well as in the work of a host of subsequent scholars. See, for instance, Baer, "The Foundations and Beginnings of the Jewish Community Structure in the Middle Ages" [in Hebrew], *Zion* 15 (1950): 1–41; Gerald J. Blidstein, "A Note on the Function of 'The Law of the Kingdom is Law' in the Medieval Jewish Community," *Journal of Jewish Sociology* 15 (1973): 213–19; Daniel J. Elazar and Stuart A. Cohen, *The Jewish Polity: Jewish Political Organization from Biblical Times to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Daniel J. Elazar, "The Kehilla," in *Kinship and Consent: The Jewish Political Tradition and its Contemporary Issues*, ed. Daniel J. Elazar (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983), 233–76; Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962); and Menachem Lorberbaum, *Politics and the Limits of Law: Secularizing the Political in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).
2. David ben Hayyim Ha-Cohen, *Sefer Teshuvot Radakh* (Jerusalem: Zikhron Aharon, 2007), no. 13.
3. Stephanus Siegmund has argued that, in Florence, it was only the external pressure of the State that allowed Jews to maintain something approaching a corporate structure. Siegmund, *The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 135–68.
4. The Hebrew title *dayyan* (judge) was also used. The millet system, which designated all Jews in the Empire as part of the same legal entity, had not yet been formally established. On the use of *cemaat* as applied to Jews, see Heath Lowry, "When Did the Sephardim Arrive in Salonica?" 205.
5. See below, chapter 5.

6. On the different dress, particularly the different head coverings, of the Toshavim and Megorashim, see Yedida K. Stillman, "Libas," in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), vol. 5, 732–52.
7. Andres Bernaldez, *Historia de los Reyes Católicos Don Fernando y Doña Isabel*, ed. Cayetano Rosell y Torres, Biblioteca de autores españoles, book 70 (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1953), chap. 87, 632.
8. In Hebrew, *ha-capusim* or *baalei ha-capron*. Epstein, *Responsa of Rabbi Simon b. Zemah Duran*, 14; and Hirschberg, *Jews in North Africa*, vol. 1, 462.
9. Cited in Goldman, *Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra*, 85–86. Here, Ibn Abi Zimra seems to challenge the argument that "[l]anguage was a means of communicating between peoples, not a means of distinguishing among them." Eric Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 14n88.
10. Joseph ben David ibn Lev, *She'elot u-Teshuvot* (Responsa) (Bnei Brak, Israel, 1988), vol. 2, no. 72. On the different use of languages among the Jews of the Levant, see Goldman, *Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra*, 144.
11. Leah Bornstein-Makovetsky, "Structure, Organisation, and Spiritual Life of the Sephardi Communities in the Ottoman Empire from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," in *The Sephardi Heritage II*, ed. R. D. Barnett and W. M. Schwab (Northamptonshire, UK: Gibraltar, 1989), 314–48, at 316.
12. See the example of Catalan merchants in Constantinople before and after its conquest by the Ottomans. Daniel Duran i Duelt, "Tension et équilibre dans les petites communautés d'Occidentaux à Constantinople: l'exemple des Catalans au xve siècle," in *Migrations et Diasporas Méditerranéennes*, ed. Michel Balard and Alain Ducellier (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2002), 97–103.
13. Barisa Krekic, "Dubrovnik and Spain: Commercial and Human Contacts, Fourteenth-Sixteenth Centuries," in *Iberia and the Mediterranean World of the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, ed. Larry J. Simon (New York: Brill, 1995), 395–403, at 396.
14. Minna Rozen, *A History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul: The Formative Years, 1453–1566* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 329–32.
15. Moses Almosnino, *Crónica de los Reyes Otomanos*, ed. Pilar Romeu Ferré (Barcelona: Tirocinio, 1998), 228, Extremo 24.
16. Rabbi Abraham Shamsolo, cited in Hacker, "Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire," 126, with slight modifications. Hacker also notes that, at least in the case of Salonica, descendants of the leading families of the first generation of exiles succeeded in drawing on their exalted lineage as a means of retaining prominence within the Jewish community throughout the sixteenth century.
17. Arbel, "Jews in Cyprus."
18. Attilio Milano, *Il Ghetto di Roma* (Rome: Staderini, 1964), 214–18.
19. Ariel Toaff, "Le Comunità di Aragona e Catalogna," 32. By 1519, the Catalan community in Rome had received papal grant to establish a new synagogue, their second, near the largest synagogue of the Roman Jews. *ibid.*, 35; and Robert Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Littman Library, 1990), 55–57.
20. A notarial document from 1496 mentions the community of the "Spanish" Jews (*spagnoli hebrei*) living in the city that nominated two leaders and empowered them "to be able to make ordinances and to tax and enact laws as they deem necessary and useful for that community." However, participation in the election of these officials was restricted to Jews of Aragonese provenance who had resided in the city for at least one year, indicating that

- "Spanish" Jews here meant those from Aragon. Anna Esposito, "Le Comunità ebraiche di Roma prima del sacco: problemi di identificazione," *Henoch* 12 (1990): 165–90, esp. 177–81. Similarly, a document from 1494 that lists a representative from "ebreorum nacionis Yspanie" who won the right to settle in the kingdom of Naples should also be read as referring to Aragonese Jews. Nicola Ferorelli, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia meridionale dall'età romana al secolo XVIII* (Bologna: A. Forni, 1966), 87.
21. Goldman, *Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra*, 183n2, 183n8, 192n14, 192n16, 192n17.
  22. Abraham Moses di Boton, *Sefer Lehem Rav (Responsa)* (Jerusalem: Ofset Pe'er, 1968), no. 73.
  23. David, *In Zion and Jerusalem*, 82.
  24. *Ibid.*, 87. Basola refers to the Mustarab Jews as "Moriscos."
  25. De Sosa, *Topografia* 1:111–14. It is probable that the so-called Balearic community constituted those whose presence in the region dates back to the exodus of 1391.
  26. Gerber, *Jewish Society in Fez*, 52, and 55. See also the existence of a "Cordoban" community among the array of Jewish congregations in Istanbul. Elijah Mizrahi, *Sefer She'elot u-Teshuvot* (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at Sefarim Darom, 1938), 13:29.
  27. Stéphane Yerasimos, "La communauté juive d'Istanbul à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Turcica* 27 (1995): 101–30.
  28. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 211. In at least one instance, a Jewish bridegroom ended his betrothal to a Jewish girl in Istanbul because he found out she was *sürgün*, and that her status would preclude her from being able to travel or relocate with him. Rozen, *History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul*, 326–28.
  29. Isaac ben Samuel Adarbi, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-nikra divre rivot* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1970) 56.
  30. Bornstein-Makovetsky, "Structure, Organisation, and Spiritual Life," 317.
  31. Goldman, *The Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra*, 86.
  32. Amnon Cohen, *A World Within: Jewish Life as Reflected in Muslim Court Documents from the Sijill of Jerusalem* (Philadelphia: Center for Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 1994), part I, 203.
  33. Moshe di Trani, *She'elot u-Teshuvot* (Jerusalem: Yad ha-Rav Nisim, 1990), part 1, no. 307.
  34. Amnon Cohen, "Communal Legal Entities in a Muslim Setting—Theory and Practice: The Jewish Community in Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem," *Islamic Law and Society* 3 (1996): 75–90, at 79–80.
  35. Abraham David, "The Expulsion from the Papal States (1569) in Light of Hebrew Sources," in *The Most Ancient of Minorities*, ed. Stanislaw G. Pugliese (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 91–99, at 97. On the place of the Jewish poor within the community, see below, chapter 5.
  36. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 178.
  37. Gross, *Iberian Jewry from Twilight to Dawn*, 98–99, with some changes to translation.
  38. Hirschberg, *Jews in North Africa*, 410–25.
  39. Cohen, *A World Within*, part I, 150.
  40. Eliezer Bashan, "The Freedom of Trade and Imposition of Taxes and Customs Duties on Foreign Jewish Traders in the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" [in Hebrew], *Mi-Mizrah umi-ma'arav* 1 (1974): 105–66.
  41. The reference here is to the festivals of Purim and Hanukah, when prohibitions against card playing were traditionally relaxed.
  42. Elijah Mizrahi, *Responsa*, 13:29.
  43. Cohen, *A World Within*, part I, 203.
  44. Renzo Toaff, *La nazione ebraica a Livorno e a Pisa (1591–1700)* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1990), 536.



45. See the letter published in Franz Kobler, ed., *Letters of the Jews through the Ages* (London: Ararat Publishing Society, 1953), vol. 1, 233–34, after Jacob Mann, *Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920–22), vol. 1, 242, and vol. 2, 309.
46. Cohen, *A World Within*, part 1, 196.
47. Ibid., 201.
48. Menachem Elon, *Jewish Law: History, Sources, Principles* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994), 809.
49. Abraham ben Mordecai Ankawa, *Sefer Kerem hemer: taqqanot hakhme Kastilyah ve-Tulitulah* (1870; reprint, Jerusalem: ha-Sifriyah ha-Sefaradit, 2000), no. 45.
50. For a critique of the Jew as postmodern “other,” see Jonathan Ray, “New Approaches to the Jewish Diaspora: The Sephardim as Sub-Ethnic Group,” *Jewish Social Studies* 15 (2008): 10–31.

## CHAPTER 5

1. On the latter, see Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora*; Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*; and Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, eds., *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450–1800* (New York, 2001).
2. Ray, “New Approaches to the Jewish Diaspora,” 12–17. Sanjay Subrahmanyam cautions that the focus on diaspora communities threatens to create “a form of false congruence between the activities of such groups, which were in fact quite varied over space and time.” See the introduction to his edited volume, *Merchant Networks in the Early Modern World* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1996), xiv–xv.
3. Joel L. Kraemer, “Spanish Ladies from the Cairo Genizah,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991), 237–67, at 255.
4. Ruth Lamdan, “Jewish Women as Providers in the Generations Following the Expulsion from Spain,” *Nashim* 13 (2007): 49–67.
5. This remained a point of continuity with the medieval period. Enrique Cantera Montengro, “Actividades socio-profesionales de la mujer judía en los reinos hispanocristianos de la Baja Edad Media,” in *El Trabajo de las mujeres en la Edad Media Hispana*, ed. Cristina Segura Graiño (Madrid: Asociación Cultural al-Muldayna, 1998), 321–45, at 331.
6. Ferro Tavares, “Portuguese Jews after Baptism,” 16–17.
7. Rozen, *History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul*, document no. 15, 358–61; and Roni Weinstein, “Mock and Clandestine Marriages, Deceits and Games in Jewish Italian Communities in the Early Modern Period,” in *Shell Games: Studies in Scams, Frauds and Deceits (1300–1650)*, ed. Margaret Reeves, Richard Raiswell, and Mark Crane (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004), 145–62.
8. Y. Boksenboim, ed., *She’elot u-Teshuvot, Matanot ba-Adam* (Tel Aviv: Bet ha-sefer le-mada’eh ha-Yahadut ‘al shem Hayim Rozenberg, 1983), 132:205. Rozen, *History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul*, 97.
9. Alashkar, *She’elot u-Teshuvot*, no. 115.
10. Abraham Isaac Laredo, “Las taqanot de los expulsados de Castilla en Marruecos y su regimen matrimonial y sucesoral,” *Sefarad* 8 (1948): 245–76. Early formulations of these ordinances can be found in the thirteenth century. Abraham ben Solomon ibn Adret, *She’elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)* (Bologna, 1539), I: 550, 1206; Abraham ben Solomon ibn Adret, *She’elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)* (Vilna, 1881), IV: 314.



11. Alashkar, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, no. 83.
12. Louis Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1924), part 7, 305–6.
13. Alashkar, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, no. 48.
14. *Ibid.*, no. 60.
15. *Ibid.*, no. 99.
16. Weinstein, “Mock and Clandestine Marriages.” On the tension between religious law and popular practice, see below, chapter 6.
17. Hannah Davidson, “Exile, Apostasy and Jewish Women in the Early Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean Basin,” *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* (2008): 133–62, at 145–47.
18. Cited in Ruth Lamdan, *A Separate People: Jewish Women in Palestine, Syria and Egypt in the Sixteenth Century* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 208–9, with slight changes.
19. Ben Israel cited in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 10. Ben Israel’s characterization of the Sephardim as an international mercantile “nation” may have been influenced by Simone Luzzatto’s *Discourse on the Jews of Venice* (c. 1638). Benjamin Ravid, “‘How Profitable the Nation of the Jewes Are’: The ‘Humble Addresses’ of Menasseh ben Israel and the ‘Discorso’ of Simone Luzzatto,” in *Mystics, Philosophers, and Politicians: Essays in Jewish Intellectual History in Honor of Alexander Altmann*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Daniel Swetschinski (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982), 159–80.
20. Frédéric Mauro, “Merchant Communities, 1350–1750,” in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 255–86; Eckhart Birnsteil and Chrystel Bernat, eds., *La Diaspora des Huguenots: Les réfugiés protestants de France et leur dispersion dans le monde, XVIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Champion, 2001); Juan Javier Pescador, *The New World Inside a Basque Village: The Oiartzun Valley and Its Atlantic Emigrants, 1550–1800* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 1–22; Carolyn Lougee Chapell, “Family Bonds across the Refuge,” in *Memory and Identity: The Huguenots in France and the Atlantic Diaspora*, ed. Bertrand Van Ruymbeke and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 172–93; and Jacob M. Price, *Perry of London: A Family and a Firm on the Sea-borne Frontier, 1615–1753* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
21. On Sephardic trade networks in the sixteenth century, see Tavim, *Os Judeus na expansão portuguesa*; Israel, *European Jewry*, chaps. 1–2; Braude, “Rise and Fall of Salonica Woollens”; Isaac Samuel Emmanuel, *Histoire de l’Industrie des Tissus des Israélites de Salonique* (Paris: Lipschutz, 1936), 31–32; and Eliezer Bashan, “The Rise and Decline of Sephardi Communities in the Levant: The Economic Aspects,” in *The Sephardi Heritage II*, ed. R. D. Barnett and W. M. Schwab (Northamptonshire, UK: Gibraltar, 1989), 349–88.
22. Peter Mark and José da Silva Horta, “Two Early Seventeenth-Century Sephardic Communities on Senegal’s Petite Côte,” *History in Africa* 31 (2004): 231–56; Tobias Green, “Further Considerations on the Sephardim of the Petit Côte,” in *History in Africa* 32 (2005): 165–83; José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, “‘Subir a Fez’ durante o século XVI: contribuição para o estudo de um ‘mellah,’” in *Os judeus sefarditas entre Portugal, Espanha e Marrocos*, ed. Carmen Ballesteros and Mery Ruah (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 2004), 87–117; and Ana Cannas da Cunha, “Cristãos-novos e judeus entre Portugal e o Norte de África (século XVI),” in *Diáspora e expansão: os judeus e os descobrimentos portugueses*, ed. António Manuel Hespanha (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1997), 85–90.

23. Nahon, "From New Christians to the Portuguese Nation in France"; and Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute*.
24. Christian merchants complained that a Sephardi notable in Alexandria, Abraham Castro, wielded too much control over the trade in and out of Egypt. Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (New York: Brill, 1995), 29–54.
25. Bashan, "Rise and Decline of Sephardi Communities in the Levant," 352–53.
26. See the letter written by the Ashkenazi traveler Rabbi Isaac Zarfati, published in Kobler, ed., *Letters of the Jews through the Ages*, vol. 1, 283–85; and Samuel de Medina, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Maharashdam: ha-Shayakhot be Tur Hoshen Mishpat* (Jerusalem: Zikhron Aharon, 2007), no. 407.
27. David, *In Zion and Jerusalem*, 62–64. Basola's description dates from the early 1520s.
28. On the current view of early modern Sephardi networks, see Israel, *European Jewry*; Jonathan I. Israel, "Diasporas Jewish and Non-Jewish and the World Maritime Empires," in *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History*, ed. Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Gelina Harlaftis, and Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglou (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2005), 3–26; Benjamin Braude, "The Myth of the Sephardi Economic Superman," in *Trading Cultures: The Worlds of Western Merchants*, ed. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2001); Francesca Trivellato, "The Port Jews of Livorno and their Global Networks of Trade in the Early Modern Period," *Jewish Culture and History* 7 (2004): 31–48; and Évelyne Oliel-Grausz, "Networks and Communication in the Sephardi Diaspora: An Added Dimension to the Concept of Port Jews and Port Jewries," *Jewish Culture and History* 7 (2004): 61–76.
29. Henry Barnby, "A Voyage to Cyprus in 1563," *Mariner's Mirror* 56 (1970): 309–14. On da Pesaro, see Joseph Shatzmiller, "Travelling in the Mediterranean in 1563: The Testimony of Eliahu of Pesaro" in *The Mediterranean and the Jews: Banking, Finance, and International Trade (XVI–XVIII Centuries)*, ed. Ariel Toaff and Simon Schwarzfuchs (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1989), 237–48.
30. David, *In Zion and Jerusalem*, 115–16.
31. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 386.
32. Such instances are numerous. See, for example, Moses Basola's defense of his teacher, Azriel Diena, when the latter was insulted by rival authorities (David, *In Zion and Jerusalem*, 16); and Moses Alashkar's defense of his friend and supporter, Elijah Capsali (Alashkar, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, 86).
33. Hacker, "Intellectual Activity of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire," 95–135. The enduring nature of these friendships could be quite moving. After his friend was captured and burnt alive in Lisbon, Isaac ibn Faradj carried the charred remains of his head with him throughout the Mediterranean until finally giving it a proper burial. Cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 124.
34. See the list of scholars given in Gedaliah ibn Yahya's *The Chain of Tradition (Shalshet ha-Kabbalah)*, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 178ff.
35. Alashkar, *She'elot u-Teshuvot* no. 23.
36. For the Ottoman Empire, see Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 296–97.
37. Meir Benayahu, "The Sermons of R. Yosef b. Meir Garson as a Source for the History of the Expulsion from Spain and the Sephardic Diaspora" [in Hebrew], *Michael* 7 (1981): 144–98.
38. Goldman, *Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra*, 193n20.
39. Simon Schwarzfuchs, "Controversie nella comunità di Roma agli inizi del secolo XVI," in *Scritti in memoria di Enzo Sereni*, ed. Daniel Carpi, Attilio Miano, and Umberto Nahon

- (Jerusalem: Fondazione Sally Mayer, 1970), 95–100 (Italian section) and 133–44 (Hebrew section).
40. Rozen, *History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul*, 321.
  41. Alashkar, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, 88.
  42. David, *In Zion and Jerusalem*, 87. The use of the more pragmatic code, the Mishneh Torah, rather than more abstract lessons on Talmud or Kabbalah, is instructive. The great works of philosophy, *halakha*, and Kabbalah from this time were the product of a relatively small number of centers.
  43. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 302; and Leah Bornstein-Makovetsky, "Cooperation and Conflict between the Religious and Political Leadership," in *Conflict and Consensus in Jewish Political Life*, ed. Stuart A. Cohen and Eliezer Don-Yehiya (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1986), 15–30. For the Maghreb, see Shlomo A. Deshen, *The Mellah Society: Jewish Community Life in Sherifian Morocco* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 70–85.
  44. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 259–60.
  45. This despite the ubiquity of rabbinic language that assumed a standard and harmonious relationship between rabbinic and lay leaders. Stephanie Siegmund, "Communal Leaders (*rashei ha-qahal*), and the Representation of Medieval and Early Modern Jews as Communities," in *Jewish Religious Leadership*, vol. 1, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 2004), 333–80, esp. 338.
  46. Bornstein-Makovetsky, "The 'Va'ad Berurei Averot,'" 121.
  47. One such example is that of Rabbi Moses Basola, who issued a point-by-point critique of the ordinances issued in Ferrara in 1554. Meir Benayahu, *Copyright, Authorization and Imprimatur for Hebrew Books Printed in Venice* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: ha-Makhon Ben-Zvi, 1971), 85–89.
  48. Levi ben Jacob ibn Habib, *She'elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)* (Venice, 1565), 99.
  49. The one exception concerned questions of religious observance (*migdar mitlah*) in which a majority of all congregations in a given city were allowed to force any dissenting *kahal* to comply.
  50. Joseph ben David ibn Lev, *She'elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)*, vol. 2, 73.
  51. Aharon Namdar, "The Rule of the Majority and the Rights of the Minority in the Balkan Jewish Communities in the Sixteenth Century," *Israel Yearbook on Human Rights* 10 (1980): 299–322, esp. 310–11; and Eliezer Bashan "The Position of the Salonican Rabbis in the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries in the Dispute Relating to the Influence of a Wealthy Minority on Public Life" [in Hebrew], *Mi-Mizrah umi-ma'arav* 2 (1980): 27–52.
  52. Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham Ha-Kohen, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Maharshakh* (Jerusalem: Defus ha-Tehiyah, 1990), 2:109.
  53. Alashkar, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, no. 19.
  54. Abner Cohen, "Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas," in *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, ed. Claude Meillassoux (Oxford, UK: Leo S. Olschki, 1971), 266–78, at 266; and Francesca Trivellato, "Sephardic Merchants in the Early Modern Atlantic and Beyond: Toward a Comparative Historical Approach to Business Cooperation," in *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800*, ed. Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 99–120.
  55. A full study of Jewish poverty in the early modern Sephardic world remains a desideratum. On the situation in medieval Egypt, see Mark R. Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish*

- Community of Medieval Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). On the poverty in the Sephardic Diaspora in later periods, see Yaron Ben Naeh, "Poverty, Paupers and Poor Relief in Ottoman Jewish Society," *Revue des Études Juives* 163 (2004): 151–92; and Yosef Kaplan, "The Self-Definition of Sephardic Jews of Western Europe and Their Relation to the Alien and the Stranger," in *Crises and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1391–1648*, ed. Benjamin R. Gampel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 121–45.
56. Rabbi Isaac Onkeneira, cited in Hacker, "Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire," 129.
  57. See Moses Basola's observation regarding Safed, cited in note 27 above.
  58. Goldman, *Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra*, 148nn74–75; and Eliyahu ben Solomon Abraham Ha-Cohen, *Sefer Hut Shel Hesed* (1865; reprint, New York: Ahim Goldenberg, 1996), 27a. The custom of disparaging the poor had already become popular among some Hispano-Jewish authors prior to 1492. Eleazar Gutwirth, "Contempt for the Lower Orders in XV-Century Hispano-Jewish Thought," *Miscelánea de estudios árabes y hebraicos* 30 (1981): 83–98.
  59. Adarbi, *Divre Rivot*, no. 224.
  60. Ibid., nos. 68, 224.
  61. The translation is from Elon, *Jewish Law*, 808–9, with some slight alterations.
  62. Ben Naeh, "Poverty, Paupers and Poor Relief," 164.
  63. Bruce Masters, "Patterns of Migration to Ottoman Aleppo in the 17th and 18th Centuries," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 4 (1987): 75–89.
  64. Almosnino, *Crónica de los Reyes Otomanos*, 229, Extremo 25: las mujeres.
  65. See Davidson, "Exile, Apostasy and Jewish Women."
  66. Berab, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, nos. 56–57. For the dispute generally, see Alashkar, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, no. 50.
  67. Abraham Shamsolo, quoted in Benayahu, "Sermons of R. Yosef ben Meir Garson," 203.

## CHAPTER 6

1. Records of the Venetian Senate, cited in Segre, "Sephardic Settlements," 114–15.
2. Quoted in Geo Pistarino, "Christians and Jews, Pagans and Muslims in the Thought of Christopher Columbus," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 10 (1995): 259–71, at 271.
3. For Islam, see Cohen, "Communal Legal Entities in a Muslim Setting," 79–80. See also David Graizbord, "Religion and Ethnicity among 'Men of the Nation': Toward a Realistic Interpretation," *Jewish Social Studies* 15 (2008): 32–65, at 42.
4. Kamen, *Imagining Spain*, 77.
5. Elisheva Carlebach, "Rabbinic Circles as Messianic Pathways in the Post-Expulsion Era," *Judaism* 41 (1992): 208–16, at 209; Joel Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1986) 103–206; and John Edwards, "Religious Faith and Doubt in Late Medieval Spain: Soria circa 1450–1500," *Past and Present* 120 (1988): 3–25. On concerns about moral decay among the Jews of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean, see Lamdan, *A Separate People*, 131–32.
6. Cited in Kim Siebenhüner, "Conversion, Mobility and the Roman Inquisition in Italy around 1600," *Past and Present* 200 (2008): 5–35, at 21.
7. Goldman, *Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra*, 137–38. On the Jewish use of amulets in the Middle East, see Lawrence H. Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz, eds., *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantations from the Cairo Genizah* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 22–45.
8. The Jewish Kabbalist Hayyim Vital, who spent much of his life in the Ottoman Levant, recorded his interactions with Muslim mystics and shamans. Hayyim Vital, "Book of

- Visions," in *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, ed. Morris M. Faierstein (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 50–53. For Jewish patronage of non-Jewish sorcerers, see Yaron Ben Naeh, "A Tried and Tested Spell: Magic Beliefs and Acts among Ottoman Jews" [in Hebrew], *Pe'amim* 85 (2000): 89–111, at 102–3 and 106.
9. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 413.
  10. Alashkar, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, no. 49. Purim is the Jewish holiday that celebrates the deliverance of the Jews from the ancient Persians as described in the Book of Esther.
  11. Kraemer, "Spanish Ladies from the Cairo Genizah," 260.
  12. Gerber, *Jewish Society in Fez*, 81.
  13. Elijah Capsali makes passing reference to great scholars of his day and the time they dedicated to teaching Talmud, even to less gifted students. *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, vol. 2, 246.
  14. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 431.
  15. Simon ben Zemach Duran, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, 2:10; and Solomon ben Shimon Duran, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, 285.
  16. Epstein, *Responsa of Rabbi Simon b. Zemah Duran*, 58. Muslim religious leaders were similarly distressed at this sort of cultural borrowing and the blurring of religious boundaries it implied. Alexandra Cuffel, "From Practice to Polemic: Shared Saints and Festivals as 'Women's Religion' in the Medieval Mediterranean," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 68 (2005): 401–19, at 401 and 410.
  17. Ruth Lamdan, "Communal Regulations as a Source for Jewish Women's Lives in the Ottoman Empire," *Muslim World* 95 (2005): 249–63, at 259.
  18. Simon ben Zemach Duran, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, 1:20.
  19. Epstein, *Responsa of Rabbi Simon b. Zemah Duran*, 12–13. For conflicts between the Spanish refugees and the native Jews in Egypt, especially in matters of religious practice, see David ibn Abi Zimra, *Responsa*, IV: 1127.
  20. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 412n2.
  21. Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government*, 324, regulation no. 10.
  22. Lamdan, *A Separate People*, 127–28.
  23. Goldman, *Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra*, 154.
  24. Simon ben Zemach Duran, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, 1: 50, 51, 57; 2:70, 109; 3:8, 194.
  25. Talmud Bavli, Beitzah, 30a. This is an allusion to women carrying water jugs on Shabbat, a practice that was technically forbidden but effectively unenforceable.
  26. David ibn Abi Zimra, *She'elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)*, 1: 163.
  27. Almosnino, *Crónica de los Reyes Otomanos*, 225–26.
  28. *Ibid.*, 223–24.
  29. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 390–92.
  30. Isaac Abravanel, *Nahalat Avot* (Venice, 1545), 1d.
  31. Carlebach, "Rabbinic Circles as Messianic Pathways."
  32. Moses di Trani, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, vol. 2, 209.
  33. Laredo, "Las taqanot de los expulsados de Castilla en Marruecos," 269.
  34. Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government*, 323–24.
  35. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).
  36. Goldman, *The Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra*, 91. See also Moses Almosnino, *Crónica de los Reyes Otomanos*, 223–26; and Gutwirth, "Contempt for the Lower Orders."
  37. Simon ben Zemach Duran, *She'elot u-Teshuvot* 3:197. On Jews shouting and fighting in synagogue, see David, *In Zion and Jerusalem*, 102. The problem was a longstanding one in Jewish

- society. Joseph Shatzmiller, "'Tumultus et Rumor in Sinagoga': An Aspect of Social life of Provençal Jews in the Middle Ages," *AJS Review* 2 (1977): 227–55.
38. Simon ben Zemach Duran, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, 3:290; Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 221; and Isaac bar Sheshet Perfet, *She'elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)* (Jerusalem: Mak-hon Yerushalayim, 1993), no. 75. On complaints of outrageous behavior by Mediterranean Jews during the holiday of *Simhat Torah*, see Elliott Horowitz, "Towards a Social History of Jewish Popular Religion," *Journal of Religious History* 17 (1992): 138–51.
  39. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 223.
  40. On the importance of honor in the Sephardic Diaspora during the seventeenth century, see Bernardo López Belinchón, *Honra, libertad y hacienda: hombres de negocios y judíos sefardíes* (Madrid: Instituto Internacional de Estudios Sefardíes y Andalusíes, Universidad de Alcalá, 2001), 217–45; and Yaron Ben Naeh, "Honor and Its Meaning among Ottoman Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 11 (2005): 19–50.
  41. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 416–17.
  42. Goldman, *The Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra*, 98n62.
  43. Joseph ben David ibn Lev, *She'elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)*, vol. 3, 133d.
  44. David, *In Zion and Jerusalem*, 102.
  45. *Ibid.*, 102–3, with some modifications in translation. For a similar case in which one of the most powerful members of the Jewish community was excommunicated for insulting members of the Jewish governing council, see Hacker, "Jewish Autonomy in the Ottoman Empire."
  46. Mark Meyerson notes: "Whereas Jews had taken fiscal and constitutional complaints before the royal court, they resolved questions of honor in the forum of the community." Meyerson, "Bloodshed and Borders: Violence and Acculturation in Late Medieval Jewish Society," in *Late Medieval Jewish Identities: Iberia and Beyond*, ed. Carmen Caballero-Navas and Esperanza Alfonso (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 13–26, at 20.
  47. Bunis, "Distinctive Characteristics of Jewish Ibero-Romance," 112.
  48. See, for instance, Rabbi Abraham Çalama, alias Maestre Enrique. Cantera Montenegro, "Judeoconvertos de Torrelaguna," 336–38.
  49. Viñuales Ferreiro, "El regreso de judeoconvertos," 101–2. For invective against Conversos, see Encarnación Marín Padilla, *Relación judeoconversa durante la segunda mitad del siglo XV en Aragón: la Ley* (Madrid: E. Marín Padilla, 1986), 123–25.
  50. Simon ben Zemach Duran, *Responsa*, III: 111. In Jerusalem, communal ordinances stated that the tax exemption granted to Torah scholars would be transferred to their widows, emphasizing the honor and social status associated with the post. David, *In Zion and Jerusalem*, 100.
  51. The Toledo-born rabbi Jacob Berab complained that other scholars "toyed with him." Berab, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, nos. 56–57.
  52. Joseph Karo, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Avkat Rokhel* (Jerusalem: Siah Yisrael, 2002), no. 52.
  53. Moses di Trani, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, part 2, section 2, nos. 206–9.
  54. Alashkar, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, no. 82.
  55. Benjamin Ze'ev ben Mattathias, *Sefer Binyamin Ze'ev*, ed. Meir Benayahu (Jerusalem: Yad ha-Rav Nisim, 1988), 74.
  56. Diane Owen Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs: Ear-Rings, Jews and Franciscan Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance City," *Past and Present* 112 (1986): 3–59. See also Cohen, *A World Within*, 31.
  57. Owen Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs," 23.

58. Ibid., 22. At other times, the distinguishing badge was red.
59. Pierre Belon, *Voyage au Levant: Les observations de Pierre Belon du Mans de plusieurs singularités & choses mémorables trouvées en Grèce, Turquie, Judée, Égypte, Arabie & autres pays étranges*, ed. Alexandra Merle (Paris: Chandeigne, 2001), 467.
60. Menachem de Lonzano, cited in Ben Naeh, "Honor and Its Meaning among Ottoman Jews," 37, with slight modifications.
61. Solomon Le-Beit ha-Levi, *She 'elot u-Teshuvot (Responsa)* (Salonica, 1662), 24.
62. Cited in Michael Strachan, *The Life and Adventures of Thomas Coryate* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 53.
63. Cuffel, "From Practice to Polemic," 403–4.
64. Inquisitorial records contain a considerable amount of information on the Conversas. See Renée Levine Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel? The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
65. See Lamdan, *A Separate People*, esp. 13–24.
66. Messod Salama, "Judeo Spanish Romances as a Source of Women's Spirituality," in *Languages and Literatures of Sephardic and Oriental Jews*, ed. David M. Bunis (Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim and Mosad Bialik, 2009), 362–85, at 365.
67. Ibid., 366–67.
68. For an analysis and corrective of the recent historiography on the Conversos' return to Judaism outside of Iberia, see Graizbord, "Religion and Ethnicity among 'Men of the Nation.'"
69. Mizrahi, *Responsa*, 47:123.
70. Ibn Verga, *Sefer Shevet Yehudah*, 38.
71. Abraham Saba, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 126–27.
72. García-Arenal and Weigers, *A Man of Three Worlds*, 19.
73. Samuel de Medina, *She 'elot u-Teshuvot Maharashdam*, 10:5b–7a.
74. David Ha-Kohen, cited in Freehof, *The Responsa Literature*, 9.
75. David ibn Abi Zimra, *Responsa*, part 4, no. 92.
76. See his commentary on Ezekiel, cited in Hillgarth, *Mirror of Spain*, 167–68.
77. *Nahlah li-Yehoshu 'ah*, Constantinople, 1731, p. 45a, col. 2, cited in Marc Saperstein, "Responsa and the Boycott of Ancona," *Jewish Social Studies* 43 (1981), 215–28, at 227n38.
78. Marina Rustow, "Karaites Real and Imagined: Three Cases of Jewish Heresy," *Past and Present* 197 (2007): 35–74, at 54–55.
79. Bruno Feitler, "Jews and New Christians in Dutch Brazil (1630–1654)," in *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800*, ed. Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 123–51; Yosef Kaplan, "The Travels of Portuguese Jews from Amsterdam to the 'Lands of Idolatry' (1644–1724)," in *Jews and Conversos: Studies in Society and the Inquisition*, ed. Yosef Kaplan (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 197–224; and Adam Ferziger, "Between Ashkenazi and Sepharad: An Early Modern German Rabbinic Response to Religious Pluralism in the Spanish-Portuguese Community," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35 (2001): 7–22.
80. Joseph ben David ibn Lev, *Responsa*, part 3, no. 75.
81. Owen Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs," 147.
82. Brian Pullan, "The Inquisition and the Jews of Venice: The Case of Gaspare Ribeiro, 1580–1581," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 62 (1979): 207–31; and Glick, "On Converso and Marrano Ethnicity."
83. David, "Safed, foyer de retour," 75–76.
84. The traditional prayer of mourning.



85. David Ha-Kohen, cited in Freehof, *The Responsa Literature*, 146.
86. *Ibid.*, 147.
87. Clearly, there was a native Portuguese community prior to 1492, but some left prior to 1497 or just thereafter. After that date, the fate of those who remained became inextricably linked to the families of the Spanish refugees.
88. Gutwirth, "Contempt for the Lower Orders."
89. The tendency to openly challenge and critique traditional religious authority was perhaps most pronounced among the Portuguese Conversos who returned to Judaism in northern Europe during the seventeenth century. Miriam Bodian, "Crypto-Jewish Criticism of Tradition and Its Echoes in Jewish Communities," in *Religion or Ethnicity? Jewish Identities in Evolution*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 38–58.
90. David Malkiel, *Reconstructing Ashkenaz: The Human Face of Franco-German Jewry, 1000–1250* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 149.
91. The idea that Sephardic identity was part of the medieval inheritance of Iberian Jews (and a source for their sense of cultural superiority) can be found throughout the scholarship on this field. A few examples, among many, are Rozen, *History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul*, 91; Joseph Hacker, "Intellectual Activity of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire," 134; Bornstein-Makovetsky, "Structure, Organisation, and Spiritual Life," 315; Samuel Armistead, "The Memory of Tri-Religious Spain in the Sephardic 'Romancero,'" in *Encuentros and Desencuentros: Spanish Jewish Cultural Interaction Throughout History*, ed. Carlos Carrete Parrondo and Aviva Doron (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2000), 265–86, 280; and Henri Méchoulán, *Être Juif: Amsterdam au temps de Spinoza* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1991), 13.

## CHAPTER 7

1. As argued by Hacker, "Intellectual Activity of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire," 134.
2. Ora Schwarzwald, "Language Choice and Language Varieties before and after the Expulsion," in *From Iberia to Diaspora: Studies in Sephardic History and Culture*, ed. Norman A. Stillman and Yedida K. Stillman (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 399–415, at 409.
3. Elaine R. Miller, "The Debate over Pre-Expulsion Judeo-Spanish: Status Quaestionis," in *Languages and Literatures of Sephardic and Oriental Jews*, ed. David M. Bunis (Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim and Mosad Bialik, 2009), 167–87; and Yaakov Bentolila, "Language and Culture in Jewish Salonika" [in Hebrew], in *Languages and Literatures of Sephardic and Oriental Jews*, 55–61.
4. Bunis, "Distinctive Characteristics of Jewish Ibero-Romance," 106.
5. Penny, "Dialect Contact," 126.
6. *Ibid.* Sephardic Jews preserved certain Iberian cultural traits, such as styles of letter writing, long after these had gone out of favor in Spain. Aldina Quintana, "The Merger of the Hispanic Medieval Heritage with the Jewish Tradition in Judeo-Spanish Texts (I): Private Letters," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 7 (2010): 317–33, at 328.
7. Schwarzwald, "Language Choice and Language Varieties," 403.
8. Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 425–26.
9. García-Arenal and Wiegers, *A Man of Three Worlds*, 14.
10. This also seems to have been the case for some Sephardic merchants for whom the ability to communicate in Spanish and Portuguese continued to allow for important mercantile connections with Iberia and Iberian colonies. Fischel, "New Sources for the History of the Jewish Diaspora in Asia," 394.



11. Andalusí Muslims settling in Tunisia abandoned their traditional clothing and assumed that of the upper classes of local Tunisian society. J. D. Latham, "Contribution à la étude des immigrations Andalouses et leur place dans l'histoire de la Tunisie," *Cahiers de Tunisie* 5 (1957): 203–52, at 242–43.
12. Cited in Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, *Processi del S. Uffizio di Venezia contro Ebrei e Giudaizzanti*, vol. 13 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1997), 76–77.
13. Laura Minervini, "The Development of Judeo-Spanish in 16th-Century Saloniki," *Neue Romania* 35 (2006): 145–55, at 147.
14. Aron Rodrigue, "The Ottoman Diaspora: The Rise and Fall of Ladino Literary Culture," in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 863–85.
15. The edition of Psalms was printed in Judeo-Spanish using Hebrew characters, whereas the Ferrara Bible used Latin characters. On Jewish printing in the sixteenth century, see Abraham Ya'ari, *Hebrew Printing in Constantinople* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967); Menahem Schmelzer, "Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books among the Sephardim before and after the Expulsion," in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1391–1648*, ed. Benjamin R. Gampel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 257–66; and Marvin J. Heller, *Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).
16. Donatella Calabi, "The Jews and the City in the Mediterranean Area," in *Mediterranean Urban Culture (1400–1700)*, ed. Alexander Cowan (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 59.
17. For an example of linguistic amalgamation, see Aldina Quintana's discussion of four Judeo-Spanish legal documents in her "Responso Testimonies and Letters Written in the 16th Century Spanish Spoken by Sephardim," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 5 (2007): 283–301.
18. Bunis, "Distinctive Characteristics of Jewish Ibero-Romance," 114.
19. Fr. Pantaleão de Aveiro, *Itinerario da Terra Sancta e suas Particularidades*, ed. Antonio Baião (Coimbra, Portugal: Universidade de Coimbra, 1927), 284–86.
20. *Ibid.*, 482–84. For similar encounters in Cyprus, Safed, and Tiberias, see *ibid.*, 54–55, 64–65, and 471–74.
21. This, contra Samuel Armistead, "History and Traditional Narrative: The Judeo-Spanish Ballad of the Exile of the Jews from Portugal," in *Studies of the History of Portuguese Jewry*, ed. Israel J. Katz and M. Mitchell Serels (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 2000), 35–53. For the quote, see Kamen, "The Mediterranean and the Expulsion of the Spanish Jews," 55.
22. This is the argument put forth by Susan L. Einbinder in *No Place of Rest: Jewish Literature, Expulsion, and the Memory of Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 76–78.
23. Hirschberg, *Jews in North Africa*, 462.
24. On the question of ethnicity among the former Conversos, see Graizbord, "Religion and Ethnicity among the 'Men of the Nation'"; and Yosef Kaplan, "The Political Concepts in the World of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam during the 17th Century: The Problem of Exclusion and the Boundaries of Self-Identity," in *Menasseh ben Israel and His World*, ed. Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulán, and Richard H. Popkin (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 45–62.
25. Edward Glaser, "Invitation to Intolerance: A Study of the Portuguese Sermons Preached at Autos-da-fé," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 27 (1956): 327–85, at 378–79.
26. The Spanish character of the Amsterdam Sephardim stemmed from a Converso identity forged in sixteenth-century Portugal, not a Jewish identity from fifteenth-century Spain.

27. The designation "Yspano de Portugalia" was often supplemented by the term "Hebreo," as a means of clarifying the seemingly contradictory expression. Aron di Leone Leoni, "Manoel Lopez Bichado: A Sixteenth-Century Leader of the Portuguese Nation in Antwerp and Pesaro," *Sefarad* 59 (1991): 77–100, at 84.
28. Abraham Saba, *Zeror ha-Mor*, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 126.
29. While the Ottoman Sephardim can generally be grouped together, they nonetheless lived in regions that were open to distinct cultural influences. The Sephardim of the Balkans and Anatolia, for instance, lived among Greek-speaking Christians and, in some areas, Greek-speaking Jews, while those in the southern part of the Empire lived among Arabic-speaking peoples.
30. Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels*, 19. In the Maghreb, reverence and nostalgia for the Andalusi past among Muslims was also part of a larger process of promoting Arab heritage over and against Ottoman Turkish identity. Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, "Sainteté et pouvoir dynastique au Maroc: La résistance de Fès aux Sâdiens," *Annales ESC* 45 (1990): 1019–42.
31. Ellen G. Friedman, *Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 3–13; and Latham, "Contribution à la étude des immigrations Andalouses."
32. André Chouraqui, *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), 89–92.
33. See the example of 'Omer Ha-Shikhehah (The Forgotten Sheaf), a commentary on the Book of Proverbs compiled by several generations of the Gabison family over the course of the sixteenth century. Abraham Gabison and Jacob Gabison, *Sefer 'Omer ha-shikhehah: perush al sefer Mishle*, ed. René Samuel Sirat (Jerusalem: Hots'aat kedem, 1973).
34. As Yaron Ben Naeh has observed: "Memory of exact origin and the importance of a particularistic identity began to fade during the second half of the sixteenth century. Increasingly, an 'invented' Sephardic group identity overshadowed specific ethnic communal identities." Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 418–19.
35. See above, chapter 4.
36. Leone Leoni, "Manoel Lopez Bichado," 88–89; and Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*.
37. Ray, "Images of the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia," 196–97.
38. On the revival of "Spanish" national pride in the fifteenth century and its influence on Jews, see Ram Ben Shalom, "The Myths of Troy and Hercules as Reflected in the Writings of Some Jewish Exiles from Spain," in *Jews, Muslims and Christians in and around the Crown of Aragon: Essays in Honour of Professor Elena Lourie*, ed. Harvey J. Hames (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 229–54; and Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities."
39. Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities," 4–7.
40. Ben Shalom, "Myths of Troy and Hercules."
41. Kaplan, "Self-Definition of Sephardic Jews of Western Europe."
42. Bornstein-Makovetsky, "Structure, Organisation, and Spiritual Life," 315n8; and Rozen, *History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul*, 92.
43. Chouraqui, *Between East and West*, 86–97.
44. 'Emeq ha-Bakha, preface.
45. Enrique Cantera Montenegro, "Notas acerca de la expulsión de los Judíos de Almazán (Soria) en 1492," in *Os Reinos Ibéricos na Idade Média: Livro de Homenagem ao Professor Doutor Humberto Carlos Baquero Moreno*, vol. 1, ed. Luís Adão da Fonseca and Maria Fernanda Ferreira Santos (Oporto, Portugal: Civilização, 2003), 399–406.

46. Gross, *Iberian Jewry from Twilight to Dawn*, 101.
47. Capsali, *Seder Eliayhu Zuta*, vol. 1, 197.
48. Cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 97.
49. Zacuto, *Sefer Yuhasin* 51a–b.
50. Cited in Baer, *History of the Jews*, vol. 2, 509.
51. Many of the classic studies on medieval Jewish messianism offer important insights into this phenomenon but are marred by a tendency to define “Ashkenazi” and “Sephardi” societies very broadly, and to characterize them by pious and secular trends, respectively. For a broader view, see Eleazar Gutwirth, “Jewish and Christian Messianism in XVth Century Spain,” in *The Expulsion of the Jews and Their Emigration to the Southern Low Countries (15th and 16th c.)*, ed. Luc Dequeker and Werner Verbeke (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998), 1–22, and the bibliography there.
52. For the general atmosphere of messianic fervor among Mediterranean Jews after 1492, see Amnon Linder, “L’expédition italienne de Charles VIII et les espérances messianiques des juifs: témoignage du manuscrit B.N. Lat. 5971 A,” *Revue des Études Juives* 137 (1978): 179–86; and Rachel Elijor, “Messianic Expectations and Spiritualization of Religious Life in the Sixteenth Century,” *Revue des Études Juives* 145 (1986): 35–49. For the Iberian context, see Haim Beinart, “A Prophesying Movement in Córdoba between 1499 and 1502” [in Hebrew], *Zion* 44 (1979): 190–200; and Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel?*, esp. chap. 3.
53. Joseph Hacker, “The Immigration of the Jews of Spain to Palestine” [in Hebrew], *Shalem* 1 (1974): 105–56; and David Ruderman, “Hope against Hope: Jewish and Christian Messianic Expectations in the Late Middle Ages,” in *Exile and Diaspora: Studies in the History of the Jewish People Presented to Professor Haim Beinart*, ed. Aaron Mirsky, Avraham Grossman, and Yosef Kaplan (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute of Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and the Hebrew University, 1991), 185–202.
54. Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, vol. 2, no. 399, the trial of Juan Pineda (alias Juan de Baena). On messianism in fifteenth-century Castile, see Zeldes, “Spanish Attitudes toward Converso Emigration,” 3n5.
55. Isaiah Tishby, *Messianism in the Time of the Expulsion from Spain and Portugal* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1985); and Elijor, “Messianic Expectations,” 38, 42–43. Such preoccupation with the potentially negative social ramifications also extended of the study of Kabbalah by those deemed to be too young. Idel, “Encounters between Italian and Spanish Kabbalists,” 340n30.
56. H. H. Ben Sasson, “The Generation of the Exiles Considers Its Fate,” in *Binah: Studies in Jewish Thought and Culture*, ed. Joseph Dan (New York: Praeger, 1989), 83–98; and Joseph Hacker, “Pride and Despair: Chapters in the Spiritual and Social Reality of Spanish Exiles in the Ottoman Empire” [in Hebrew], in *Culture and Society in Medieval Jewry*, ed. Menahem Ben Sasson, Reuven Bonfil, and Joseph Hacker (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1989), 541–86.
57. Avraham Gross, “The Ten Tribes and the Kingdom of Prester John: Rumors and Investigations, before and after the Expulsion from Spain” [in Hebrew], *Pe’amim* 48 (1991): 5–41.
58. Esther 6:1.
59. Capsali, *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, vol. 2, 109, with an allusion here to Genesis 47:19. Capsali’s message to his readers about writing being a diversion during a time of pestilence also recalls Boccaccio.
60. Capsali portrayed the Ottoman reception of the Jewish exiles from Spain in messianic terms as part of the coming ingathering of all “the dispersed people of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” Capsali, *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, vol. 1, 367.

61. Yerushalmi, "Clio and the Jews," 210.
62. Ibn Verga, *Sefer Shevet Yehudah*, 21.
63. 'Emeq ha-Bakha, 62.
64. Ibid., 76; and Brizzolari, *Gli ebrei nella storia di Genova*, 71–72.
65. 'Emeq ha-Bakha, 93.
66. Ibid., 92.
67. Describing how Charles V sought to expel the Jews from the Kingdom of Naples, Ha-Kohen complains that the emperor had forgotten his covenant (Exodus 11:1).
68. 'Emeq ha-Bakha, 95. Ha-Kohen continued to add to and edit *Vale of Tears* throughout his life, but always gave it a stirring ending.
69. Ibid., 97.
70. A committee of Jewish notables, including Elijah Capsali, Joseph del Medigo, and Judah Todesco, that appeared before the Venetian Doge in 1541 to defend Jewish rights brings to mind Ha-Kohen's depiction of the Jewish courtier-scholar. Aleida Paudice, *Between Worlds: The Life and Writings of Elia Capsali* (Munich: Meidenbauer, 2009), 211–12.
71. Cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 53.
72. Hirschberg, *Jews in North Africa*, 401–2; and David Corcos, "The Jews of Morocco under the Marinids," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 54 (1963–64): 271–87. In the poem, "Meghila" associates al-Maghili with the classic villain Haman from the Book (*Megilah*, or Scroll) of Esther.
73. Abraham Saba argued that 1497 was a divine punishment for Jewish sin that was far worse than the Expulsion of 1492. Saba, cited in Raphael, ed., *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 126.
74. See Yosef Yerushalmi, "A Jewish Classic in the Portuguese Language," in *Consolação as Tribulações de Israel, de Samuel Usque*, ed. José V. de Pinta Martins (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1989), 15–123.
75. In the first half of his chronicle 'Emeq ha-Bakha, Ha-Kohen simply reproduces Ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehuda*. On Ibn Yahya's *Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah*, see above, chapter 3.
76. Yerushalmi, "Clio and the Jews," 204. See, for instance, Hacker, "Intellectual Activity of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire," 120; and the poem by Judah Abravanel cited in note 78 below.
77. For similar lamentations, see Ruth Lamdam, "Mothers and Children in the Ottoman Empire," in *Sephardi Family Life in the Early Modern Diaspora*, ed. Julia Rebollo Lieberman (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 70–98.
78. Abravanel's poem is taken from an English translation by Raymond P. Scheindlin in "Judah Abravanel to His Son," *Judaism* 41 (1992): 190–99. (An abbreviated version can be found in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997], 357–63.) The poem concludes with a call for the hastening of the messianic advent on behalf of all Jews, but these lines read more like a rhetorical flourish—the coda of a pious Jew—than a declaration of any true messianic sentiment.
79. For early modern and modern incarnations of the Sephardic mystique, see Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*; Daniel Schroeter, *The Sultan's Jew: Morocco and the Sephardi World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002); and Ismar Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 34 (1989): 47–66.

## CONCLUSION

1. On this subject, see Daniel Schroeter, "From Sephardi to Oriental: The 'Decline' Theory of Jewish Civilization in the Middle East and North Africa," in *The Jewish*

*Contribution to Civilization: Reassessing an Idea*, ed. Jeremy Cohen and Richard I. Cohen (Oxford, UK: Littman Library, 2008), 125–48; and Emily Gottreich, “Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the Maghrib,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 98 (2008): 433–51.

2. Yaron Ben Naeh has noted that the seventeenth century was marked by the “gradual mutual assimilation” of the various Jewish ethnic groups under Ottoman rule and a “decline in particularism.” Ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*, 371, 378. I believe that we can push this process back to the latter half of the sixteenth century. Another set of communities also began to proliferate within the European colonies in the Americas, though in many ways they remained tied to the cultural conditions and political vicissitudes of Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands.
3. Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 39.
4. See above, chapter 2.
5. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

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